



GRANDMASTERS ON THE SPOT

**BASSEM AMIN FIRST 2700+ AFRICAN PLAYER ON HIS EXPERIENCES AT TATA STEEL
S.P. SETHURAMAN INDIAN GM ON FAILING TO ELIMINATE ANISH GIRI AT WORLD CUP**

AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE

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WHERE GREAT MINDS MEET

CARUANA

LONDON CHESS CLASSIC

**REVENGE
SERVED COLD**

JOHN BURKE
JOHN FEDOROWICZ

WIJK AAN ZEE TATA STEEL

**WHAT COULD
POSSIBLY HAVE
GONE WRONG?**

PRIYADHARSHAN
KANNAPPAN

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INTERVIEW

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FOR CAROL MEYER**
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FROM DAWN IN LONDON TILL DUSK IN WIJK TO A NEW RISE IN BERLIN

Fabiano's FABULOUS ROLLERCOASTER

CHESS IS SUCH A TOUGH SPORT THAT FABIANO CARUANA CAN SCORE 6/9 IN LONDON AND A MONTH LATER ONLY 5/13 IN WIJK AAN ZEE. WAS HE WITHHOLDING HIS CARDS FOR ULTIMATE SUCCESS IN THE CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT IN BERLIN?



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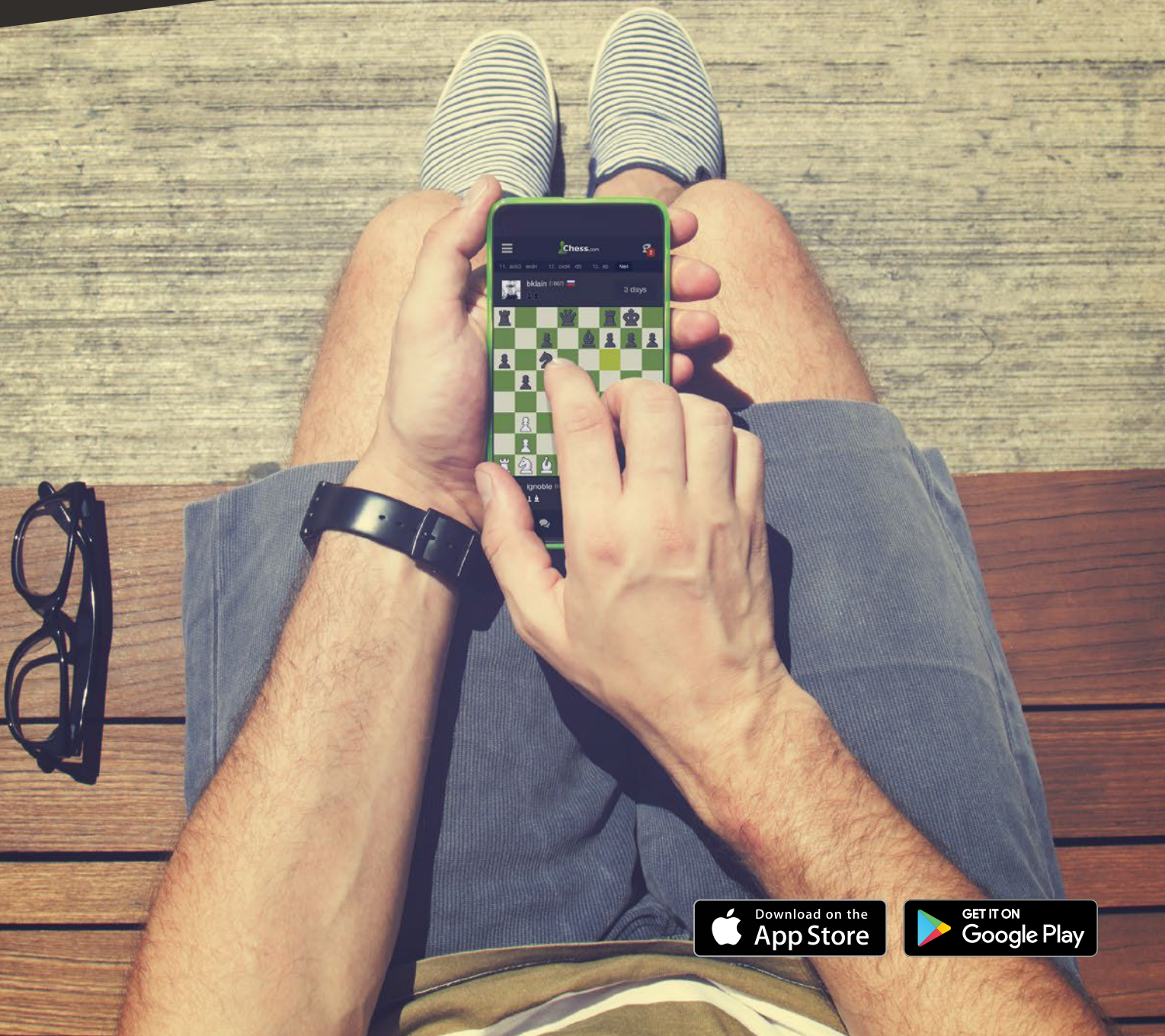
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LATEST NEWS: CARUANA FLYING HIGH AT THE CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT

After five rounds played at the FIDE Candidates Tournament in Berlin, USA's Fabiano Caruana is the sole leader with 3½ points. A smooth victory in the first round over compatriot Wesley So, followed by a spectacular topsy-turvy win three rounds later against Kramnik, propelled Fabiano to the top of the leaderboard. What can be seen from the first five rounds is that Fabiano has displayed excellent preparation and huge self-confidence as he outplayed his opponents in complex middle-game positions. So far, it looks like most predictions before the event may well come true. However, there are of course nine more rounds to be played before we will know for sure who is to challenge Magnus Carlsen.

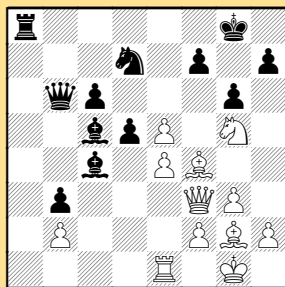
Standings after the 5th round:

1. Caruana 3½,
- 2-3. Kramnik, Mamedyarov 3,
- 4-6. Ding Liren, Aronian, Grischuk 2½,
- 7-8. Karjakin and Wesley So 1½.

Fabiano Caruana 2784 - Wesley So 2799

Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗b4+ 4.♗d2 ♗e7
5.♗g2 d5 6.♖f3 0-0 7.0-0 c6 8.♗b3
♖bd7 9.♗f4 a5 10.♗d1 ♖h5 11.♗c1
♖hf6 12.♖bd2 b5 13.c5 b4 14.♗c2 a4
15.♗e1 e5 16.♖xe5 ♖xe5 17.dxe5 ♖d7
18.♖f3 ♗xc5 19.♖g5 g6 20.♗f4 ♗b6
21.e4 b3 22.axb3 axb3 23.♗e2 ♗a6
24.♗f3 ♗c4 25.♗xa8 ♗xa8



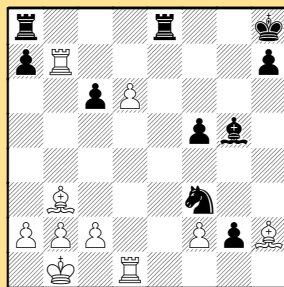
26.e6 dxe4 27.exf7+ ♗xf7 28.♖xe4 ♗d4
29.♖d6 ♗d5 30.♗e2 ♖f8 31.♗xd5+
cxd5 32.♗f3 ♗a5 33.♗e7 **1-0**



Vladimir Kramnik 2800 - Fabiano Caruana 2784

Candidates tournament, Berlin 2018

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♖f6 3.♖xe5 d6 4.♖f3
♖xe4 5.♗e2 ♗e7 6.♖c3 ♖xc3 7.dxc3
♗xe2+ 8.♗xe2 ♖c6 9.♗e3 ♗e7 10.0-0
0-0 11.♗he1 ♗f6 12.♖d2 ♗e8 13.♗f3
♖e5 14.♗f4 ♖f8 15.♗d5 c6 16.♗b3 ♗f5
17.h3 g5 18.♗h2 ♖g7 19.c4 g4 20.♖e4
♗xe4 21.♗xe4 ♗g5+ 22.♖b1 gxf3
23.c5 f5 24.♗b4 hxf3 25.♗xb7+ ♖h8
26.cxd6 ♖f3



27.♗a4 ♖xh2 28.♗xc6 ♗ad8 29.d7 ♗e2
30.♗xg2 ♗xf2 31.♗c6 ♖g4 32.♗xa7
♖e3 33.♗g1 h6 34.♗c7 ♖g7 35.a4 ♖f7
36.♗b5 ♖e7 37.a5 ♗f4 38.c3 ♖d6 39.♗b7
♗g4 40.♗e1 f4 41.a6 h5 42.a7 ♗a8 43.b4
h4 44.c4 h3 45.c5+ ♖e5 46.♗b8 ♗xa7
47.♗g8 ♗f6 48.d8 ♗ ♗xd8 49.♗xg4 ♗f6
50.♗g6 ♗b7 51.♗e2 ♗xb4+ 52.♖a2 ♖c2
53.♗c1 ♖d4 54.♗d3 ♗a4+ 55.♖b1 ♖b3
56.♗e1+ ♖d5 57.♖c2 ♖d4+ 58.♖b1
♖f3 59.♗d1 ♗a1+ 60.♖c2 ♗xd1 61.♗a6
♗d2+ 62.♖c1 ♗b2+ 63.♖b1 ♖xc5
64.♗b7 ♖e5 65.♗f6 f3 66.♗f5 f2 **0-1**

GRANDMASTERS SUPPORT NEW YORK CHARITY

The second annual Charity Chess Championship will be held on Sunday, May 20, 2018 at Columbia Grammar & Preparatory School (CGPS) in New York City. The event features a USCF-rated Quads tournament, a Grandmaster blitz tournament, a tandem Grandmaster simul as well as a silent auction and raffle. Over 20 grandmasters so far have confirmed their participation. All the net proceeds from the event will go to Mount Sinai Hospital's Ovarian Cancer Translational Research Laboratory, a genomic research program dedicated to uncovering the genetic basis for the early detection and prevention of ovarian cancer.

Details and registration for the event can be found on the website www.charitychess.org. Join on May 20 or make a donation to say "check" to ovarian cancer.

JOHN BURKE CLINCHES GM-TITLE IN THE FAST LANE

16-year old John Burke from New Jersey is a new US teenage GM! He shared 1st place with GM Denis Kadric at the Winter 2018 Charlotte Chess Center Invitational, held January 11-15, having scored 6½/9 (+5-1=3) and thereby gained his third and final GM-norm. Burke's GM-title will be made official after the FIDE Presidential Board Meeting in early April. ACM is happy to welcome John as our new GM-contributor (pages 10-17).

XIONG CRUSHES THE FIELD IN SAINT LOUIS

17-year old GM Jeffery Xiong convincingly won the 2018 Spring Chess Classic in Saint Louis – with an undefeated +4 score, 1½ points clear of the chasing pack. The tournament was effectively a timely warm-up for five participants in the forthcoming US Championship (Xiong, Shankland, Akopian, Onischuk and Zhrebukh).

LETTER from the EDITOR

ROLLERBALL

With two wins in the first five rounds, Fabiano Caruana made a great start at the Candidates Tournament in Berlin. In fact it's almost as if he wanted to fulfill the "rollercoaster" prediction emblazoned on our front cover. Well, if the only way is up on his current rollercoaster ride, then, as expressed by our "Readers' Voices", he should shine brightly in Berlin. We can only hope he will keep up the good work to the very end of this arduous and breathtaking event.

Of course, only one player out of the eight can be the official title challenger to Magnus Carlsen. But this is what makes the tournament so exciting for chess fans and even a privilege for those who are following the day to day battles of the chess gladiators. We now have great expectations of further uncompromising fighting chess in the remainder of the tournament, where rating points count for nothing and all that really matters is who wins the ultimately decisive game.

Though I considered it my job to visit Berlin, I had already previously been hugely disappointed whenever the Russian company Agon, hired by FIDE, was organizing events in the World Championship cycle. But this time they took a further downhill step by what I could only perceive as being a mockery of chess. In fact I was quite simply shocked at the outcome. On arriving at the tournament venue, what I found was a six floor building with bare walls, dimly lit corridors with pink neon signs, and security men dressed in black on every corner – truly a dystopian atmosphere from one of Huxley's novels. Yes, I get it: there is no need to hold an important chess event in cold Siberia when it's much easier to hide it away in a rundown building located in an industrial area of a big city.

With such an unwelcoming environment for spectators and journalists, as well as experienced local chess organizers, how many will there be to come forward and draw public attention to this unacceptable state of affairs? Even the eyes of the cameras tell us nothing as they are focused strictly on the chessboard action.



If there is a problem with the availability of sufficient funds then this is a matter that must be urgently addressed. Or are we to see the forthcoming world title match with champion and challenger locked up in some off-location basement in London? The faceless mastermind behind the show might even be wondering why there is any need to provide a couple of chess players with decent conditions. The lack of respect for chess displayed by Agon – or should we say the very leadership of FIDE – is blatantly obvious. Somehow the 1975 science fiction movie *Rollerball*, springs to mind...

Am I asking for too much? Or was I overly influenced by an upbeat event in which I had competed a few weeks earlier, one where people greet you with a smile, where they gather in huge numbers to socialize with each other, to have fun and play some inspiring games of chess? To be sure, the World Amateur Team & U.S. Team East in Parsippany, NJ, on which we will report in our next issue, is one of those events that keep alive the true spirit of chess and, thank God, it's not the only one. For example, as we learn on page 113 of this issue, plans are afoot to hold online events in actual venues, thereby not forgetting that chess thrives not only because of the players but also the spectators, who want to feel the joy of being close to their heroes, making it a veritable chess pilgrimage!

Josip Asik, Editor-in-Chief

Round by Round with Caruana at the London Classic

By drawing in the first round with the black pieces against the world champion, Fabiano Caruana somehow gave advance notice to his rivals that he meant business at the London Classic, the final stage of the Grand Chess Tour.

However, from the spectators' perspective, the first three rounds of this richly sponsored event bore a close resemblance to shadow boxing as no blood at all was shed. Then four more draws in round four threatened to leave chess fans worldwide even more dissatisfied...if it had not been for the last game to finish! At the 2016 Candidates tournament, the final round saw the same pairing: Karjakin vs. Caruana, and the same opening — the Sicilian. However, this time Fabiano chose the Taimanov variation, hoping to obtain a better game than he did in Moscow. And so it was... He completely out-prepared the former world title challenger and smoothly cruised to the first win of the entire tournament!

The scenario in round five was reminiscent of the Groundhog Day movie. Caruana struck again, this time against Vishy Anand, making it payback time for the defeats he had suffered at the Moscow Candidates and the Sinquefeld Cup 2017.



The following two rounds brought changes to the leader board. A couple of draws by Fabiano were more than matched by consecutive wins from Nepomniachtchi and with only two rounds to go it looked like a two-horse race.

But then, in round eight, chess fans witnessed a real shocker. Magnus Carlsen starred in the unaccustomed role of a blunderer, giving Nepo an early Christmas present and thereby propelling him into the sole lead with a round to spare, as Caruana could only draw against Nakamura.

The ninth and final round was no less thrilling as Nepomniachtchi decided to place the fate of the tournament in Caruana's hands. The Russian's quick draw with the white pieces against Vachier-Lagrave effectively forced Fabiano to win on demand against England's top player, the solid Mickey Adams — and this was never going to be an easy task. Meanwhile Magnus did what was necessary against Aronian and so claimed overall victory for himself in the Grand Chess Tour.

Much later, Fabiano's lengthy and determined efforts resulted in an eventual win, thereby delaying the announcement of the tournament winner since, according to the Grand Chess Tour rules and regulations, a rapid and blitz tie-breaker now had to follow. Here, despite having had the benefit of a five hour rest, Nepomniachtchi's nerves seemed more frayed than those of Caruana, who admitted that his six hour marathon against Adams had left him too tired to feel any pressure. The first two rapid games were conducted pretty well by both players but then, after a narrow escape in the first blitz game, Nepo succumbed to a neat final blow delivered by Caruana in their second encounter, after which the American grandmaster had earned the well-deserved right to raise the London Chess Classic trophy.





FABIANO CARUANA VICTORIOUS IN LONDON, AHEAD OF THE WORLD CHAMPION

Revenge Served Cold

"IF YOU ARE CONFIDENT AND IN GOOD SHAPE, NORMALLY THINGS WILL FALL YOUR WAY" – YOUNG AMERICAN GM JOHN BURKE NOW EXPLAINS CARUANA'S GREAT PERFORMANCE IN LONDON. HE ALSO NOTES THAT FABIANO MUST HAVE TAKEN PLEASURE IN GAINING REVENGE FOR HIS LAST ROUND LOSS TO KARJAKIN IN THE 2016 CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT.

by **GM JOHN BURKE**



Fabiano Caruana, London 2017. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

Caruana's performance in this tournament was a bright spot in an otherwise mediocre year by his standards.

I think he gained confidence after holding a very difficult position with Black against Magnus in the first round. After his back to back wins against Karjakin and Anand, things pretty much fell into place for him, as he was in the sole lead. A hat-trick by Nepo put him half a point off the pace, however, and he managed to win against Adams in the final round, and then in the playoff.

How did Fabi do it? I don't think he approached the tournament differently than any other. Except for his game against Karjakin, he didn't drastically deviate from his repertoire. He just didn't make any blunders and took advantage of his opportunities as they came. He saved the only game in which he was in trouble, against Magnus, and won every game in which he was better. I think this is very instructive because it shows that you don't have to do anything drastic to change your fortunes. He did not go berserk, but he just played his normal chess. If you are confident and in good shape, normally things will fall your way.

All of the games in the first three rounds had been drawn, though not for lack of fight. As chess fans were beginning to come around with the familiar cry of how boring all these draws were, Fabiano saved the day with this brutal victory with the black pieces over last year's World Championship challenger, Sergey Karjakin.

LONDON CHESS CLASSIC

B48

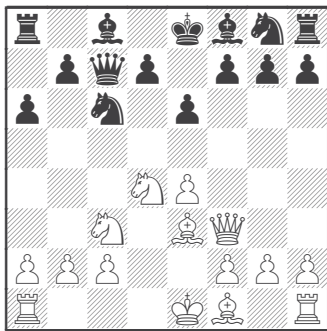
Sergey Karjakin	2760
Fabiano Caruana	2799

Round 4, London 2017

1.e4 c5 The Sicilian is already an indication that Caruana is looking to do more than maintain equality. Usually he only plays it in rapid and blitz events.

2.♟f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♞c6 5.♞c3 ♔c7 The Taimanov is a reliable choice that has been taken up by more and more strong players in the past five years. It's still not as popular as the Najdorf, but its combination of solidity and attacking potential makes it an attractive choice for many types of players.

6.♙e3 a6 7.♞f3



This continuation has become the absolute main line of the Taimanov. Compared to the typical English attack setup with ♞d2, White has the option of playing ♞g3, which is often annoying for Black. If he exchanges with ...♞xg3, the endgame is typically pleasant for White. However, if he lets the queen sit on g3, it can become difficult to develop the f8 bishop, as the pawn on g7 is always under fire. Given that Karjakin had played this way in his last four games

John M. Burke is an American chess star on the rise! The 16-year-old grandmaster from Brick, New Jersey, already stunned the world in 2015 by breaking a record as the youngest player ever to surpass 2600+ ELO points. Recently, he has again had a successful run. He won two consecutive tournaments in Saint Louis (2017) and Charlotte (2018) and earned his final GM norms. He is now just waiting for the title to be officially awarded at the next FIDE Congress..



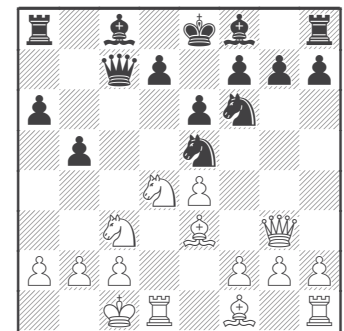
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

against the Taimanov, it was not difficult for Caruana to predict that the game would reach this position. Interestingly, after the game Karjakin said that almost any other line would have been a better choice for him, since he walked right into Caruana's preparation.

7...♞e5 Fabi chose 7...♞d6 against Kramnik in Dortmund 2016. After 8.0-0-0 ♙e5 9.g3 ♞f6 10.♞e2 0-0 11.f4 ♞xd4 12.♞xd4 ♞xd4 13.♞xd4 d6 14.♞d2 b5 15.a3 ♙b7 16.♙g2 ♞fd8 17.♞d1 White was slightly better and pressed for a while, but Black held on to draw in 85 moves.

8.♞g3 b5 8...h5 is another serious option for Black, played several times by Giri. However, it does give the impression that Black is stretching himself too far.

9.0-0-0 ♞f6



Black is still several moves away from castling, but hopes his active piece play will suffice for now. White's play is very direct – he hopes to crash through in the center.

10.f4 Kicking the knight is by far the most natural move, but the sacrifice 10.♞xb5 is worth mentioning. Then 10...axb5 11.♞dxb5 ♞b8 12.♙f4 d6 13.♞xd6 ♞h5 14.♞g5 ♞xd6 15.♞xd6+



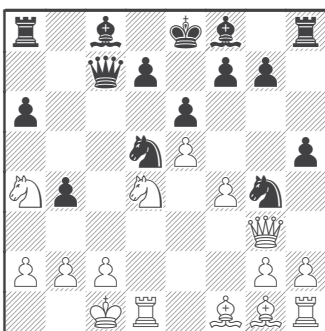
Sergey
Karjakin,
London 2017.
Photo by
Lennart Ootes.

♔xd6 16.♙xe5 ♖a5 17.f4 ♜xf4 18.♞d5 ♜xd5 19.exd5 ♞e2+ 20.♚b1 ♔xd5 21.♔xg7 ♜f8 22.b3 is one example of how this line could go. The position is dynamically equal, but it seems to me far easier to play the white pieces, and indeed White won in 50 moves in A.Morozevich 2692 - I.Bukavshin 2657, Moscow 2015.

10...♞eg4 11.♙g1 11.e5 does not quite work. The dark squared bishop cannot be given away so cheaply! 11...♞xe3 12.♔xe3 (12.exf6 ♞xd1 13.fxg7 ♜g8+) 12...b4+.

11...h5 11...b4 12.♞a4 ♞h6 is another way of playing, leading to a bizarre position with misplaced knights for both sides.

12.e5 b4 13.♞a4 ♞d5



According to my database, this position has arisen seven times, and Caruana is the only player to win with the black pieces. Black's play will mainly come from the half-open c-file, his strong knight on d5, and targeting the misplaced knight on a4. Meanwhile, White will try to blast open the position, perhaps with a well-timed f4-f5, before Black has a chance to solidify with ...g6.

14.♞b3!? Shifting the knight out of the way and opening the eyes of the bishop on g1. However, if White has nothing better than moving backwards like this in such a position, I can't help but feel that Black is already doing quite well. 14.h3, kicking the knight, seems obvious, but that piece may end up on f5 sooner or later. Then 14...♞h6 15.♙d3 g6 16.♙e4 ♙b7 17.♔f3 and now 17...♜c8 (17...♞f5 proved to be badly timed after 18.♞xf5 gxf5 19.♙xd5 ♙xd5 20.♜xd5 exd5 21.♞b6 ♜b8 22.♞xd5± in A.Fier 2581 - K.Leenhouts 2487, Amsterdam 2017, when White won in 27 moves.) 18.♚b1 ♞f5 and Black is fine.

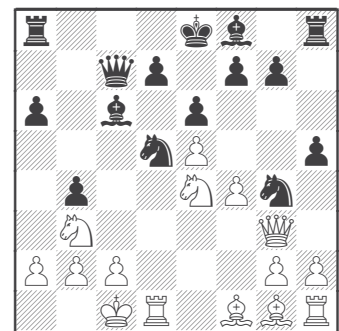
14...♙b7 The fact that Caruana spent only four seconds on this move indicates that he was still well within his preparation.

15.♞ac5 This was the main point of

14.♞b3, but the knights turn out to be pretty clumsy.

15...♙c6 The main problem for White is not that this position is objectively so bad for him, but rather that he does not have a clear way forward. Meanwhile, Black has the obvious idea of pushing ...a5-a4.

16.♞e4

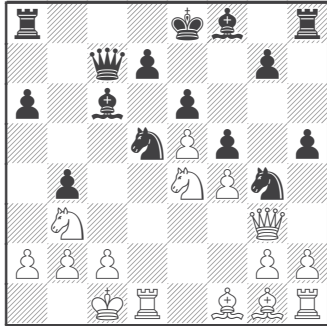


This fourth consecutive knight move is met with a very strong reply, but already White is short on ideas. Again, 16.h3 ♞h6 only seems to help Black, with ...♞f5 coming. 16.♚b1 is a move that is always useful in Sicilians, and White may fantasize about grabbing on a6 now that a2 is protected. 16...a5 is met by 17.♞e4 ♞de3. (17...a4 is also possible, but immediately getting rid of the knight on e4 seems simpler.) 18.♙xe3 ♙xe4 and

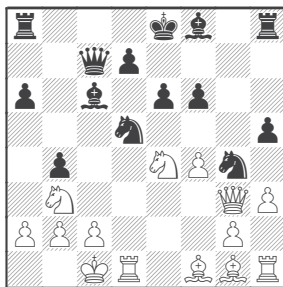


the position is still balanced, but it seems to me that Black will be more likely to get his attack going in the near future.

16...f5! This presents White with a difficult choice, and none of his options are fully satisfactory.



17.h3?! 17.♘g5, leaving Black's g4 knight so supported, is only asking for trouble, and indeed this allows a tactic. 17...h4 White must either give up the f4 pawn or play 18.♙f3, which runs into 18...♖c3. 17.exf6 was perhaps the best move. 17...gxf6 The g-file is now open for Black's rook, ...♙h6 is potentially coming, and the f4 pawn is loose, so White has to have something concrete. 18.h3



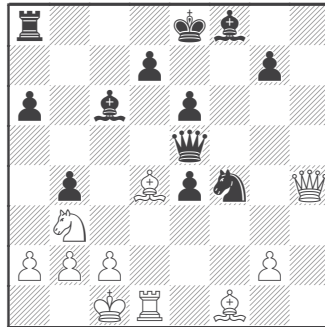
18...♙xf4+! It's best to trade queens. (The tricky move 18...♘xf4?! is asking for trouble due to 19.♙e1, defending the e4 knight and stopping any ideas of ...♗e2+, with an extremely dangerous attack.) 19.♙xf4 ♘xf4 20.♗bd2 f5 21.hxg4 fxe4 and though Black is still to be preferred, with an extra pawn temporarily, it's not the end of the world.

17...h4 Kicking the queen away from the defense of the vital f4 pawn.

18.♙e1 fxe4 19.hxg4 ♘xf4 White's center pawns are collapsing.

20.♙xh4 White must at least try taking this pawn in order to open lines. After 20.♗d4 ♗e7 White is down a pawn with no play.

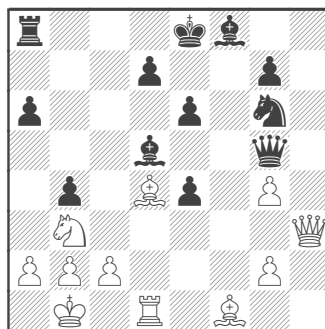
20...♙xh4 21.♙xh4 ♙xe5 22.♗d4



22...♗g6! This key move, which gets the queen out of trouble, had to be seen in advance.

23.♙h3 ♙g5+ 24.♗b1 So, the forcing moves are over and it's time to take stock. Black is up a pawn and his king is completely safe in the center of the board, guarded by his center pawns. Although trading queens seems logical in order to exploit this pawn-up advantage, it is interesting to note that Caruana does not specifically seek this out, but rather plays the position.

24...♗d5 24...♙h4?! is met by 25.♙e3. Now, taking the g-pawn would only enhance White's development after 25.♗e2.



25.♗g1? I don't see the purpose of banishing this bishop to the first rank. 25.♙g3 was probably the best try, with potential ideas of infiltration with ♙c7. Black is still better, but his position is not 100% secure. For example, the natural move 25...d6 has the drawback of cutting off the f8 bishop. (After 25...♙f4

UNDER THE SURFACE

by Jan Markos

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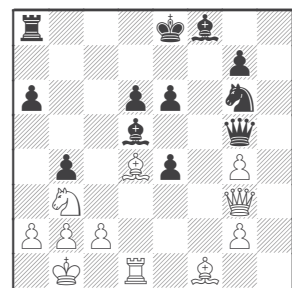
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QUALITY CHESS

26.♙xf4 ♘xf4 27.♗c5 the queens are traded under decent circumstances for White. Of course Black is still the favorite, but compared to what happened in the game, this is a dream for White.)



Then **26.♙e1!** and with the b4 pawn loose Black suddenly has some concrete problems to solve.

25...♗e7 Now everything is in order. Every black piece is more promising

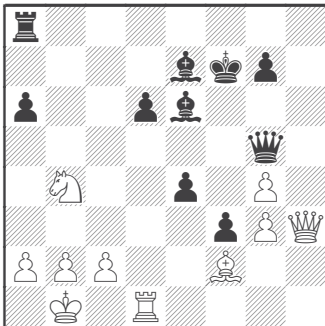
than its counterpart. This even goes for the rooks, as Black's may support a future ...a5-a4 advance, while White's can only stare at a perfectly anchored bishop on d5.

26.g3 This guards the f4 and h4 squares, but has the drawback of cutting off White's coordination even further, as ♖e3 is no longer an option.

26...♟e5 27.♙e2 ♟f3 Now Black has absolutely no fears, and a player of Caruana's caliber should be able to convert this easily.

28.♙xf3 exf3 29.♙d4 ♔f7 The fact that Black can move his king for the first time on move 29 and still be completely safe is a testament to the dominance that he has. There are many ways to win from here, but Caruana decides to just run his e-pawn forward.

30.♟c1 d6 31.♟d3 e5 32.♙f2 ♙e6 33.♟xb4 e4



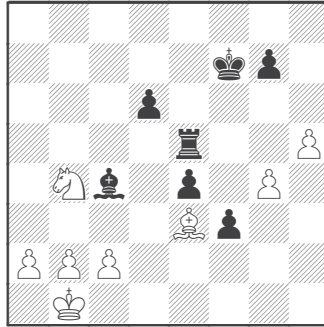
White has leveled the material count, but at the cost of opening the b-file for Black's rook, while the threat of ...e3 looms as well.

34.♙h1 ♜c8 35.♟xa6 This loses immediately, but good advice was hard to offer. 35.c3 was the only way to keep the game going, opening an escape hatch for the knight on c2. 35...a5 36.♟c2 ♙xg4 37.♟e3 ♙g6 White has a temporary blockade, but Black's monster bishops, connected passers, and attacking potential will bring him the victory in the end.

35...♙a5 36.♙h5+ The queen trade finally occurs, but by this point Black has maximized the potential of his position,

so there are not even any technical problems to overcome in the endgame.

36...♙xh5 37.gxh5 ♙g5 38.♜e1 ♙c4 39.♟b4 ♜e8 40.♜e3 ♙xe3 41.♙xe3 ♜e5 42.g4



42... ♜g5 A neat finishing touch. The rook cannot be captured because of ...f2, and Black will take on g4 and escort his pawns home.

White resigned

A convincing victory by Fabi, and I'm sure he took small pleasure in getting revenge for his loss in the last round to Sergey in the Candidates Tournament, where he lost as Black in a Sicilian.

Before the last round, Nepomniachtchi had a half-point lead over Caruana. He made a quick draw with MVL, which made Fabi's mission clear right from the start – he had to win to force a playoff.

A29

Fabiano Caruana	2799
Michael Adams	2715

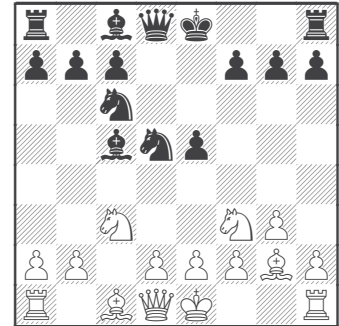
Round 9, London 2017

1.c4! At such a high level, opening choice determines the outcome of a game greatly, so I feel it is worth commenting on Caruana's choice. For a must win game like this, it's noteworthy that he avoids 1.e4 e5, in which Adams is extremely solid. Instead, he chooses the English, which is of course popular, but it cannot be compared to lines like the Berlin which have been analyzed to death!

1...♟f6 2.♟c3 e5 3.♟f3 ♟c6 4.g3 The reversed Dragon has typically been the

most popular way to play this branch of the English, although 4.e3 has become extremely popular as well.

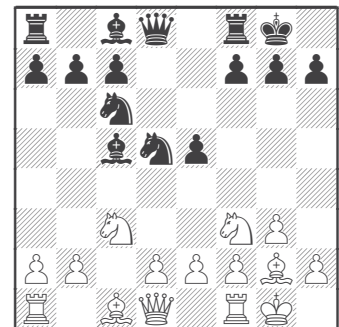
4...d5 5.cxd5 ♟xd5 6.♙g2 ♙c5



This developing move looks obvious, but it has only caught on at the highest levels within the past year. The most popular move has overwhelmingly been 6...♟b6, dodging any potential discoveries on the long diagonal. However, people have realized that none of White's direct tries here are that promising, and if Black secures his bishop on the a7-f2 diagonal, he should be doing alright.

7.0-0 7.♟xe5?! This discovery is usually not worth considering until White has castled. 7...♟xc3 8.♙xc6+ (8.♟xc6?? ♙f6) 8...bxc6 9.bxc3 ♙d5 10.♟f3 ♙h3 and White will sorely miss his light-squared bishop.

7...0-0



8.d3 Now 8.♟xe5 makes a bit more sense, but it still only leads to equality. 8...♟xc3 9.bxc3 ♟xe5 10.d4 ♙d6 11.dxe5 ♙xe5=. 8.♟xd5 potentially leads to an unusual and flashy tactic. 8...♙xd5 9.♟g5!? ♙d8 10.♟xh7 ♜e8 (10...♟xh7? 11.♙c2+±) 11.♟g5 This is a neat escape route, but it still does not seem to be enough to give

White an advantage. 11...♖xg5 12.♗xc6 (White can also keep his light-squared bishop and play 12.d4 but he runs into problems on the d-file after 12...♖h5 13.dxc5 ♜d8 14.♗d2 ♜d4 when he is under pressure.) 12...bxc6 13.d4 ♖h5 14.dxc5 e4 The position appears pleasant for Black, although White eventually won in L.Aronian 2799 - F.Caruana 2807, Saint Louis 2017.

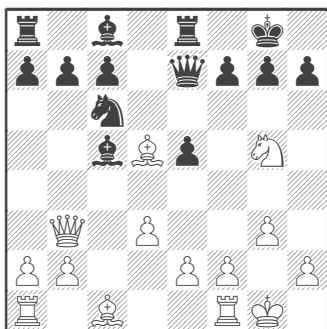
8...♞e8 Black has tried a plethora of moves here, although the consensus among the elite seems to be that 8...♗b6 is the best. There's nothing wrong with Adams' choice though. 8...♗b6 would secure the bishop and keep the f7 pawn protected for at least another move and after 9.♗d2 ♗g4 10.♞c1 ♜xc3 11.♗xc3 ♞e8 12.b4 the position is equal but still full of possibilities for both sides. For example, from here Anand went on to win a brilliancy in 29 moves against Caruana in Saint Louis 2017.

9.♜g5 This is the logical reaction to Black's last move, as it targets f7.

9...♜f6 9...♜xc3, changing the pawn structure, is a decent idea here and leads to a different type of game. Although the b-file will be opened for White, Black's bishop on b6 will hold down the fort: 10.bxc3 h6 11.♜e4 ♗b6=.

10.♞b3 ♞e7 If White does not have a good forcing continuation, Black will simply kick back the knight with ...h6 and enjoy a perfect position. Unfortunately for White, he just doesn't have anything here!

11.♜d5 ♜xd5 12.♗xd5

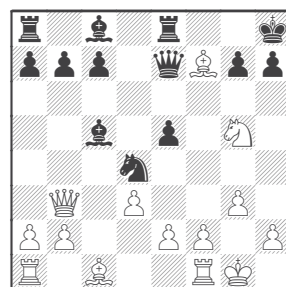


12...♜d8 This is the "automatic" move, but there was a complicated alternative in 12...♜d4!. This move is very inhuman, but it appears to be extremely dangerous.

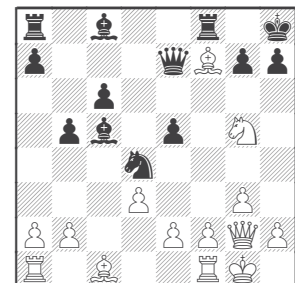


▲ Michael Adams, London 2017.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

White has to walk a tightrope for the next few moves. The analysis that follows barely scratches the surface of the possibilities, but the main point to note is that Black is the one dictating matters. 13.♗xf7+ This is obvious and critical. (After 13.♖d1 ♞f8 the whole operation by Black may appear pointless, but now his knight has avoided going to d8, and is instead lodged on d4, ...♗g4 may come next, targeting e2. A key point is that e2-e3 does not work for White here: 14.e3? ♖xg5 15.exd4 ♖d8! ♞) 13...♞h8



14.♖c4! Not exactly obvious, but it's the only move to keep the game close. (14.♖d1? defends the pawn, but runs into trouble. 14...♗g4 15.♞e1 ♞f8 Retreating the bishop loses to ...♜xe2+, when White's position falls apart, so White is in dire straits. Or 14.♖d5? ♞d8 and Black removes his rook from the attack with tempo. Then 15.♖e4 ♗f5+.) 14...b5 15.♖d5 Now the point of provoking b5 is shown – the a8 rook is hit, so there is no time for ...♞d8. 15...c6 16.♖g2 ♞f8 Now White has two choices. This analysis is deep and it's unlikely this would have occurred, but there's beauty in the chaos of these lines so I'll show them anyway.



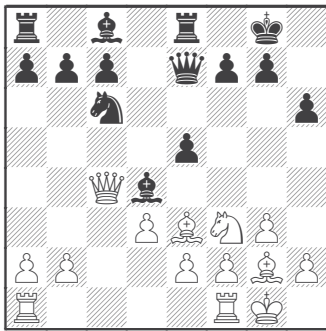
17.♗h5 This is the obvious move,

rescuing the bishop and defending e2. (There is also 17.♔g6?! when taking the bishop runs into g4 followed by ♖h3+, although that is a wildly unclear variation.) 17...♖f5 This skewer on the fifth rank triggers a highly unusual sequence. 18.h4 h6 19.♖h1! Now taking the knight will result in the h-file opening and ♔g6 coming. The position is absolute madness and anything can happen. Now, back to normal chess.

13.♖c4 ♔d4 The bishop is slightly annoying to deal with, since White never really wants to play e3 and weaken the d3 pawn.

14.♔g2 The bishop returns home, signaling that the opening has not turned out the way White would have hoped.

14...h6 15.♖f3 ♖c6 16.♔e3!?



This is a critical moment. White has lost his opening advantage and in fact the position is even slightly more pleasant for Black. This move disrupts the status quo and invites imbalances. If Adams had, for example, played 16...♔e6 here, I don't think Caruana would have even come close to winning. However, as I'm sure Fabi hoped, Mickey took up the challenge.

16...♔xe3 17.fxe3 e4 18.dxe4 A highly unusual position has arisen. White is up a pawn, but his tripled pawns make a sad impression. On the other hand, they do control many important central squares, and White has the f-file to work with.

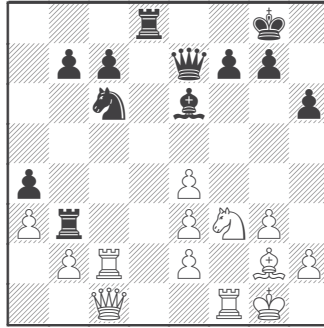
18...a5 18...♖xe4? 19.♖xf7+! ♔xf7 20.♖g5+ ♔g8 21.♖xe4±.

19.a3 Weakening the light squares is a concession, but the a-pawn had to be moved in view of a future ...♔e6,

attacking a2. 19.♖ac1 is met by 19...♔e6.

19...♖a6 Black immediately pounces on the b2 pawn.

20.♖ac1 ♖b6 21.♖c2 ♔e6 22.♖c3 ♖b3 23.♖d2 ♖d8 24.♖c1 a4

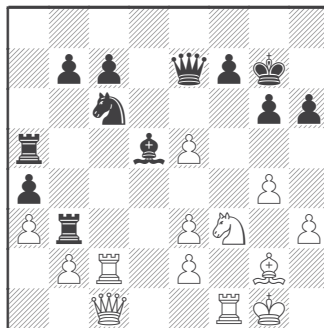


Black has pushed White back and made as much progress as he could, but there are not many ideas left. White is starved for ideas as well, so if both players simply shuffled back and forth, a draw would have been a reasonable outcome.

25.♖c5 ♖d7 26.h3 ♖d8 27.g4 g6 28.♔h1 ♔g7 29.e5 ♔d5 30.♔g1 ♔e6 31.♔f2 ♖e7 32.♔g1 Both sides have moved back and forth and nothing much has happened. However, Adams begins to change the character of the game. If he had played 32...♖d8, the game would have likely been drawn soon, if not instantly.

32...♖d5 33.♖c4 ♖a5 Now the rook has switched positions to a5. Although this gives up the d-file it increases the pressure on the e5 pawn.

34.♖c2 ♔d5?



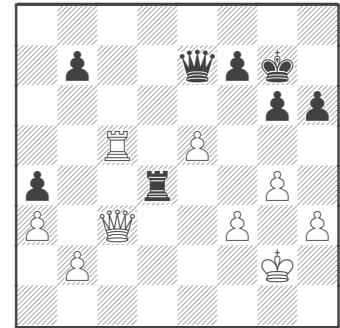
This is the move that started the slide in the wrong direction for Black. Mickey must have overlooked White's 37th move.

35.♖d4! Suddenly the pawns are straightened out.

35...♖xd4 36.exd4 ♖g3 37.♖f3! This was the key idea. The exchange sacrifice is only temporary, as the g3 rook will be entombed.

37...♔xf3 38.exf3 c6 39.♔h2 ♖xg2+ 40.♔xg2 White is a pawn up, but Black has very good drawing chances, since White's center pawns can be blockaded and attacked easily.

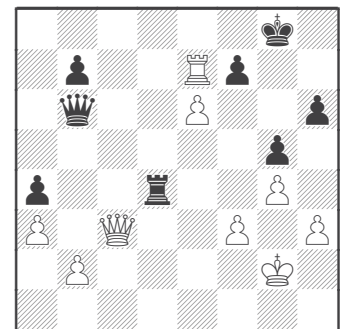
40...♖d5 41.♖c4 c5 42.♖xc5 ♖xd4 43.♖c3



43...♖d8? After this the queen and rook combination becomes too strong. Black had to try his luck in the queen ending. 43...♖d3 44.♖xd3 ♖xc5 45.♖c3 ♖b6 46.e6+ may look scary, but things are not so easy after 46...f6. For better or worse, this had to be tried.

44.♖c8 44.e6! is even stronger, blasting open Black's king. Then 44...fxe6 45.♖c7+ ♔f6 46.♖xb7 and Black is still in a pin and his king is hopelessly exposed.

44...♖b6 45.♖e8 g5 46.♖e7 ♔g8 47.e6!

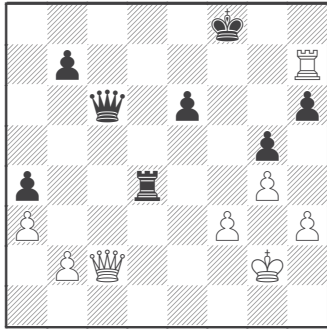


Finally this move comes, exposing the seventh rank.



47...fxe6 48.♖c2 ♔f8 49.♞h7 If 49.♞h7?? then 49...♞d2+.

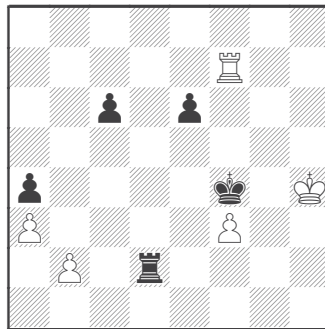
49...♞c6



50.♞xc6? This move is difficult to criticize, but White's attack is killing with queens on the board. He could have played 50.♞h8+! ♔e7 51.♞h7+ ♔d6 52.♞d8+ ♔c5 53.♞c2+ ♞c4 54.♞d3! This move is very difficult to appreciate from afar. White has no immediate win, but Black's king cannot find safety. For example, 54...♔b6 will be met by 55.♞d6.

50...bxc6 51.♞xh6 ♔f7 52.♔g3 ♞d2 53.♞h7+ ♔f6 54.♞b7 ♔e5 55.h4? After this, incredibly, Black seems to be in the drawing zone. In principle 55.♞b4 c5 56.f4+ gxf4+ 57.♞xf4 ♞xb2 58.♞xa4 should be good for White with his connected passers, but Black's king is very active, so even this isn't completely clear.

55...gxf4+ 56.♔xh4 ♔f4 57.♞f7+



57...♔e3?? A very understandable mistake. Correct is 57...♔e5! as the

king has to stay close to the e-pawn. Then 58.g5 ♞xb2 59.f4+ ♔e4 60.g6 ♞g2 61.♔h5 c5 62.g7 ♞g3! Only this move, picking up the a-pawn, draws. 63.♔h6 ♞xa3 64.g8♞ ♞h3+ 65.♔g7 ♞g3+ 66.♔f8 ♞xg8+ 67.♔xg8 a3 68.♞a7 ♔xf4 69.♞xa3 e5=. Obviously there were many deviations along the way, but none of them seem to win for White.

58.♔g3! This is the key difference. Now 58...♞xb2 can be met by 59.♞e7, netting the e-pawn.

58...♞d1 59.g5 ♞g1+ 60.♔h4 ♞g2 61.♞f6 e5 62.g6 ♞xb2 63.♔g5 ♞g2+ 64.♔h6 ♞h2+ 65.♔g7 c5 66.♔f7 c4 67.g7 ♞h7 68.♞a6

Black resigned

In the critical moments, Caruana managed his nerves better than his opponent and was the deserved victor. By winning the playoff against Nepo, Fabi won the tournament, ending the year in the best possible way. ■

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WHY CARUANA SWITCHED FROM THE "OPEN SICILIAN" TO THE "ROSSOLIMO" IN A CRUCIAL LONDON CLASSIC TIEBREAKER GAME.

by **GM JOHN FEDOROWICZ** ||||||||||||||||||

The variation 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♙b5+!? was introduced by American GM Nicolas Rossolimo in the late 1940's. Since then it has been played by many GM's, including World Champion Magnus Carlsen. Another player who greatly popularized the "Rossolimo" was Russian grandmaster Sergey Rublevsky.

Just to be clear, I refer to the "Maroczy" setup several times. A typical example is 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 6 c4. White's c- and e-pawns control Black's pawn breaks and give White a persistent space advantage. To battle for space Black must make a pawn break and usually the best one is ...b5.

There are so many tournaments for the top players and they play each other so often that coming up with different opening ideas is vital. Here Caruana

Fabiano Caruana. Photo by Lennart Ootes





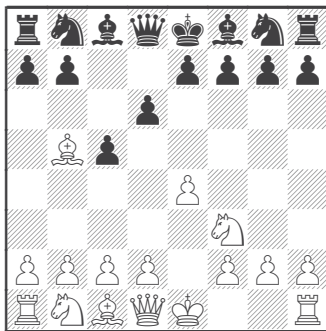
switches from the “Open Sicilian” to the “Rossolimo”. The present game was the two GM’s fifth meeting with these colors, but the first three were rapid or blitz, just like this tiebreaker. It’s interesting that Caruana didn’t try the “Open Sicilian” upon which Nepo would certainly have played a “Najdorf”. One thing to keep in mind... This was a tiebreaker game with a time control of 10 minutes with a 15 second increment.

B52

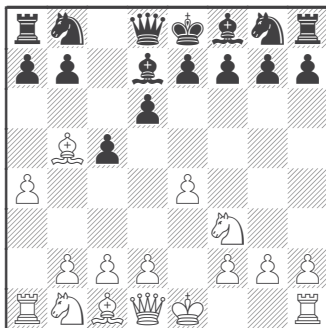
Fabiano Caruana	2799
Ian Nepomniachtchi	2729

Tie-break (rapid), London 2017

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♙b5+!?



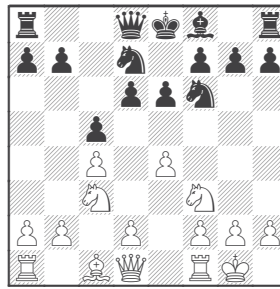
This introduces the Rossolimo.
3...♙d7 4.a4!?



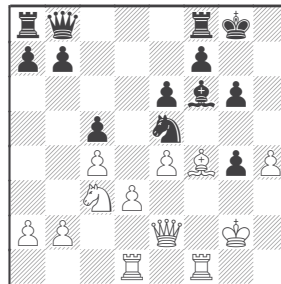
A good alternative to exchanging on d7. White will play for central control.

After 4.♙d7+ ♖xd7 (4...♙xd7 is another good recapture, but my personal preference is 4...♘xd7 which works better vs. Maroczy Bind setups. I feel in these types of positions the half open c-file can give Black good counterplay.) there can follow:

A) 5.c4 ♘gf6 6.♘c3 e6 7.0-0

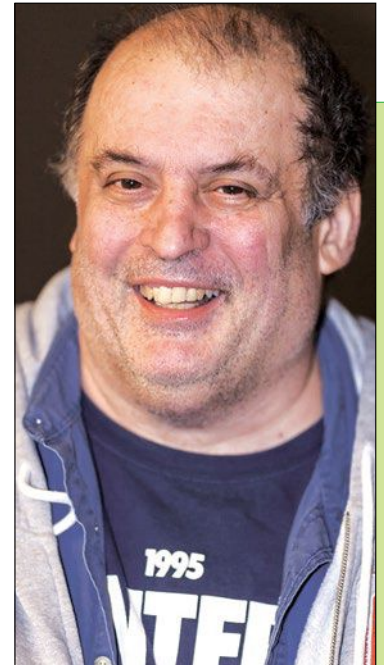


7...♘e5!? preventing White’s “Maroczy” set up (After 7...♙e7 8.d4 cxd4 9.♘xd4 a6 10.b3 ♖c8 11.♙b2 0-0 12.♖c1 White’s space advantage scares me. If Black can’t arrange ...b5 or ...d5 White can just sit on the position.) 8.♘xe5 dxe5 9.d3 ♙e7 10.f4 0-0 11.fxe5 ♘d7 12.♙f4 ♙g5! 13.g3! (13.♙g3 can be met by 13...♙h4) 13...♙e7 (with the idea of ...g5) 14.h4 ♖b8 (14...♖c7 might amount to the same thing, but I wanted to stay away from any ♘b5 by White, just in case. 15.♙g2 ♘xe5 16.♖h5 ♙f6! (White is unable to add power to the pin.) 17.♙ad1 g6 18.♖e2 h5 19.g4 hxg4



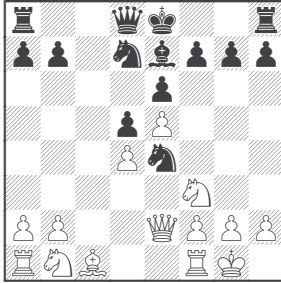
20.h5!? g5 (After the game Eric told me he thought 20...gxh5 was okay, but I was a little scared so locking things up was playing it safe.) 21.♙g3 ♖d8 22.♖e3 ♘f3 23.e5 ♙e7 24.♘e4 ♖d4! 25.♖xd4 ♘xd4 26.♘f2 ♘f5 27.♘xg4 ♖h7 28.♙f2 ♙ad8 29.♘f3 b6 and in this pretty equal position a draw was agreed. E.Hansen 2596 - J.Fedorowicz 2422, Montreal 2014.

B) 5.0-0 ♘gf6 6.♖e2 e6



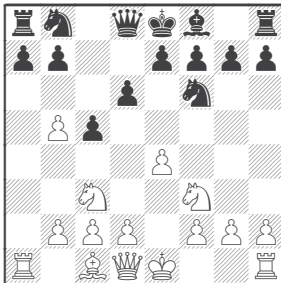
GM John Fedorowicz, “The Fed,” elected to the Chess Hall of Fame in 2009, earned his international grandmaster title in 1986. He played in 21 U.S. championships and was a two-time U.S. Olympic Team member and captain. He five times tied for first at the World Open and was a 1980 U.S. Open co-champion. In his teens, he won two US Junior Invitationals and the 1975 National High School Championship.

7.c3 This move doesn't cause any problems for Black. (7.b3 ♖e7 8.♗b2 0-0 9.c4 is a way for White to get a safe "Maroczy Bind" type of spatial advantage. 9...a6 10.d4 cxd4 11.♖xd4 ♖c7 12.♖c3 ♖fe8) 7...♗e7 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 d5 10.e5 ♖e4



11.♖bd2 (11.♖e1 can be met by 11...♖b6! 12.♗e3 – But not 12.f3?? ♖xd4+ 13.♗e3 ♖xe3+ 14.♖xe3 ♗c5 – 12...f6 13.f3 ♖g5) 11...♖xd2 12.♗xd2 0-0.

4...♖c6 4...♗xb5?! gets a dubious mark and is almost never played as the b5 pawn restricts Black's development. After 5.axb5 White's doubled pawns are not a problem and the open a-file can be useful. 5...♖f6 6.♖c3

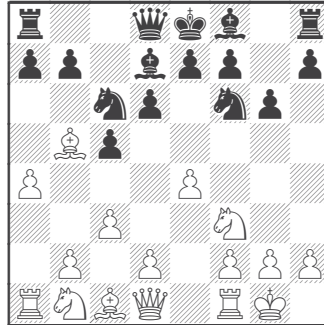


6...e6 (Following 6...♖bd7 7.d4 cxd4 8.♖xd4 the pressure on the a-file gives White a simple yet effective plan of blasting away on a7. For example: 8...♖b6 9.♗e3 ♖xd4 10.♗xd4 a6 11.♗e2 g6 12.♗a4 ♗g7 13.♗ha1 ♖b8 14.♗xf6! ♗xf6 15.♖d5 and Black is under great pressure.) 7.d4 cxd4 8.♖xd4 This type of variation can prove annoying for Black as 8...b6 9.e5 dxe5 10.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 11.♖xe5 ♖e8 12.0-0 leaves Black with some coordination issues.

5.0-0 g6 I believe something like 5...e6 is a better path to equality, e.g. 6.c3 a6 7.♗c4 ♖f6 8.♗e1 ♗e7 9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 ♖b4!? 11.♖b3 d5 12.exd5 ♖fxd5.

6.c3 Building a strong center is White's best plan. Black must be wary of the opponent exploiting his space advantage to put a stranglehold on the position.

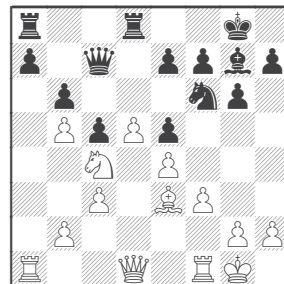
6...♖f6



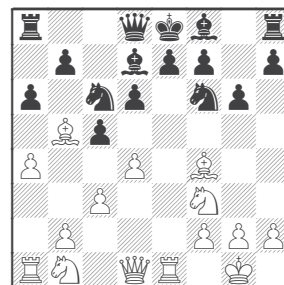
7.d4! White juices up the position with a dangerous pawn sacrifice.

7...cxd4 Alternatives are:

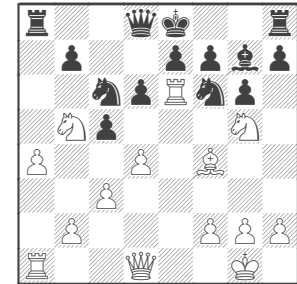
7...♗g7 8.d5 ♖e5 9.♖xe5 dxe5 10.f3 ♗xb5 11.axb5 0-0 12.♗e3 ♖c7 13.♖d2 b6 14.♖c4 ♖fd8



15.♗a6! This simple plan puts Black under enormous pressure. 15...♖e8 16.♖a4 ♖b8 17.♗a1 Winning a pawn after which Black's position collapses. 17...♖c7 (17...♖d7 18.♖xb6) 18.♗xa7 ♗xa7 19.♖xa7 ♖xb5 20.♖xb8 ♗xb8 21.♖xb6! 1-0 K.Shirazi 2455 - A.Denker 2300, Boston 1988. The c5 pawn is next to fall since 21...♗xb6 loses to 22.♗a8+ ♗f8 23.♗h6. 7...♖xe4!? 8.♗e1 ♖f6 9.♗f4 a6

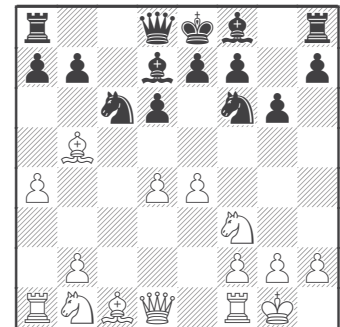


10.♖a3!? White gets fancy with this piece sacrifice. (The other principal option was 10.♗f1 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♗g4) 10...axb5 11.♖xb5 ♗e6 (The only chance is to block the ♗e1.) 12.♖g5 ♗g7 13.♗xe6



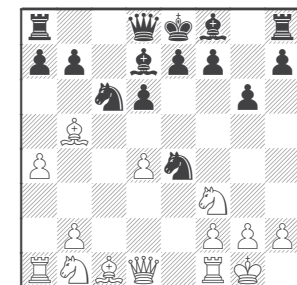
13...0-0! (We have reached a very important position in this line, showing Black's defensive ideas. But not 13...fxe6 14.♖xe6 ♖d7 15.♖bc7+ ♖f7 16.♖g5+ forcing the king backwards and winning a full rook.) 14.♗e1 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♖d5 16.♗g3 ♖d7 M.Dzhumayev 2527 - E.Ghaem Maghami 2589, New Delhi 2008. Amazingly, Black is okay here.

8.cxd4



8...♗g7 In cases like this we must apply the old saying "better safe than sorry" to pawn snatching in chess.

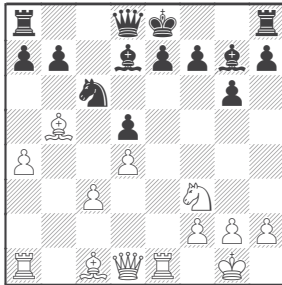
After 8...♖xe4



A) 9.d5 enters into a messy looking line, but Black comes out okay. 9...dxe5 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.Re1 f5 12.d3 dxc5 13.Rxe5 g7 14.Re1 0-0 15.dxc3 dxd3 16.Wxd3 f4.

But I would choose:

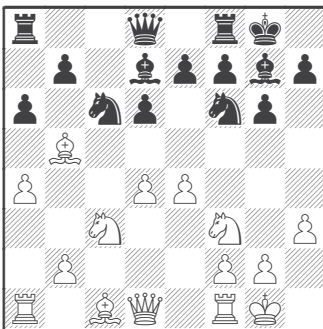
B) 9.Re1 d5 (In fact 9...dxf6!? 10.g4 a6 looks like Black's best try after the pawn snatch.) 10.dxc3 dxc3 11.bxc3 g7



12.Wb3!, threatening to recover the pawn with a very active position. Then 12...e6 13.Wxd5 or 12...g4 13.g3 f6 14.dxe5 gxe5 15.Rxe5 0-0 16.gxc6 bxc6 17.gxe7, etc.

9.d3 0-0 10.h3! This type of move, preventing g4, solidifies White's strong center and makes the d7 pretty useless.

10...a6



11.g4 With his space advantage White could also have played 11.g2!?, but perhaps Fabiano had his eye on a possible e5-e6 push. I prefer the retreat to e2 as the bishop is less exposed there. On the other hand the move played is directed against Black's ...e5 ideas. 11...Rc8 (11...e5 12.d5 dxe7 13.a5 b5 14.axb6 Wxb6

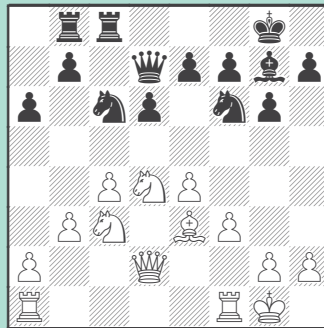
SUPPLEMENTARY GAME

An example of Nick Rossolimo at work in his pet line.

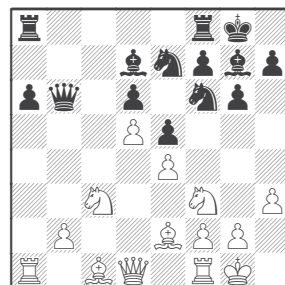
Nicolas Rossolimo	2513
Sejer Holm	2499

Havana Olympiad 1966

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.g5+ d7 4.gxd7+ Wxd7 5.0-0 dxc6 6.d4 cxd4 7.dxd4 g6 8.c4! The best chance for an advantage. 8...g7 9.g3 d6 10.f3 0-0 11.dxc3 Rfc8 12.b3 Overprotecting c4 and avoiding tricks on the c-file. 12...Rab8 13.Wd2 a6

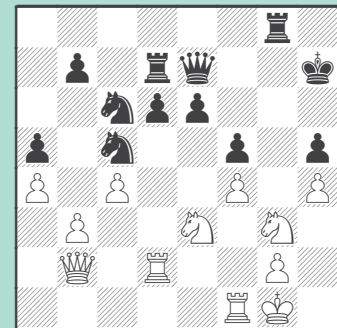


14.a4 Stopping b5 is a typical theme in these positions.



15.d2 reaches a position similar to a King's Indian Defense where Black's queenside has been opened up. After 15...dxe8 16.dxc4 Wb7 17.g3 White's intended d6 is hard to deal with.) 12.g3 e5 13.d5 d6 14.a5 and Black is in big trouble. What to do about the knight on b4?

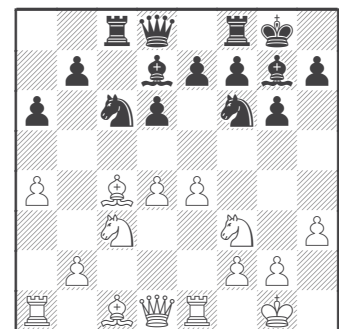
14...Wd8 15.Rab1 d7 16.dxe2 Wa5 17.Rfd1 h8 18.We1 dxc5 19.Rd5 Wb4 20.Wc1 Wb6 21.Rd1 a5 22.d5 Wd8 23.g6 e6 24.gxg7+ Wxg7 25.Wc3+ f6 26.dxe3 Rxc7 27.Rd2 We7 28.Rbd1 Rd7 29.dg3 h5 30.h4 h7 31.f4 Rg8 32.Wc2 h8 33.Rf1 f5 34.exf5 gxf5 35.Wb2+ h7



36.dgxf5! exf5 37.d5 Wg7 38.d6+ h8 39.dxd7 Wxb2 40.Rxb2 dxd7 41.Rd1 Rg6 42.Rbd2 dxc5 43.Rxd6 Rg4 44.R6d5 dxe6 45.Rxf5 dxf4 46.Rd7 g8 47.Rxb7 dxd2 48.Rg5+ Rg5 49.hxg5 d4 50.d2 h4 51.Rb6 dxe5 52.c5 d4+ 53.d3 h3 54.dxd4 White's superiority in space led to a nice tactical crush.

Black resigned

11...Rc8 12.Re1



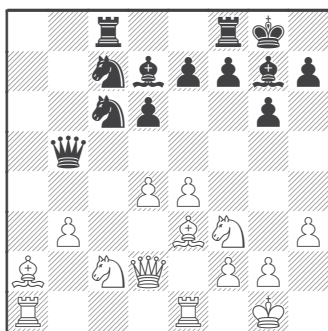
The usual procedure when having an unassailable pawn center is simply to build up your forces behind it.

12...dxe8 I think Black should have tried

12...e5 at this point. Then 13.dxe5 ♖xe5 14.♗xe5 dxe5 15.b3 looks very solid for Black.

13.♗b3 ♖a5 14.♗a2 ♖c4 15.♖d3 b5 16.axb5 axb5 17.b3 ♖a5 18.♗xb5 White snatches a pawn while remaining very solid.

18...♖b6 19.♗a3 ♖c6 20.♗c2 ♖c7 21.♗e3 ♖b5 22.♖d2

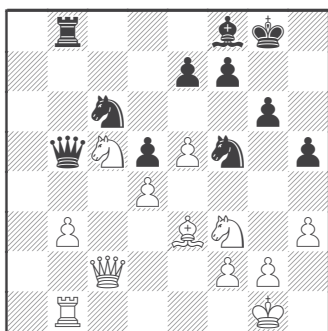


22...d5!? Finally striking the center, but at the cost of a pawn.

23.e5 ♗f5 24.♖ec1 ♗e6 25.♗ce1 ♗e4 26.♗h2 ♖b4 27.♖xc8 ♖xc8 28.♗b1 h5 29.♗hf3 ♖c6 30.♗c2 ♗xc2 31.♖xc2 White continues to be a pawn up, but Black has constructed a tough defense.

31...♖b8 32.♗d3! ♗f8 If 32...♖xb3 then 33.♖xc6 ♖xd3 34.♖xd5.

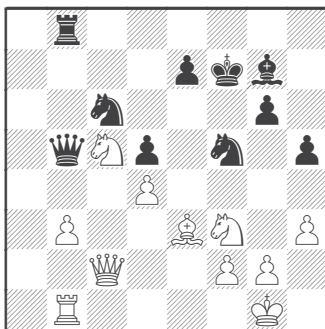
33.♖b1 ♗g7 34.♗c5 ♗f5 Black allows a tactical shot, prying open the king position. Both players were in terrible time pressure so White's next move spells devastation. But anyway 34...e6?! 35.♗d7 ♖b7 36.♗f6+ ♗h8 37.♗h4 (intending 38.♖g6!!) 37...♗e7 38.g4 leaves Black all tied up while White slowly builds up his attack.



35.e6! This sudden and unexpected blow blasts open the black king position.

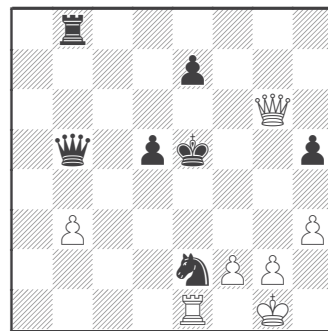
35...♗g7 If 35...f6 then 36.g4! breaks through to g6 with check.

36.exf7+ ♗xf7



37.♗d7! ♗cxd4 37...♖d8 38.♖xc6!

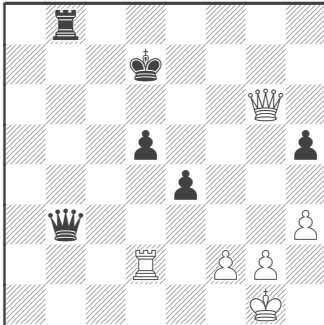
♖xc6 39.♗de5+ wins. I believe 37...♖c8 is Black's best chance to hang on for dear life. Play might then continue 38.♗de5+ ♗xe5 39.♗xe5+ ♗g7 40.b4!?. 38.♗de5+ ♗xe5 39.♗xe5+ ♗e6 40.♗xd4 ♗xd4 41.♖xg6+ ♗xe5 42.♖e1+ ♗e2+ This check is forced but allows White to regain the piece while Black's king remains in bad shape.



Fabiano Caruana vs. Ian Nepomniachtchi, London Chess Classic 2017.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.



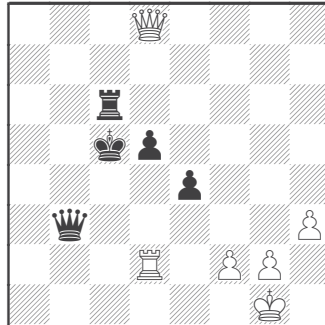
43.♔f1! ♕d4 44.♖xe2 e5 45.♗g3
e4 46.♗e3+ ♕e5 47.♕g1 ♗xb3
48.♗g5+ ♕e6 49.♗g6+ ♕d7 50.♗d2



The difference in king safety decides the game.

50...h4 51.♗f5+ ♕c6 52.♗f6+
♕c5 53.♗d4+ ♕c6 54.♗f6+

♕c5 55.♗xh4 ♖b7 56.♗d8 ♖b6
57.♗c7+ ♖c6 58.♗a5+ ♕d6
59.♗d8+ ♕c5



60.h4! This passed pawn will prove a serious distraction for Black.

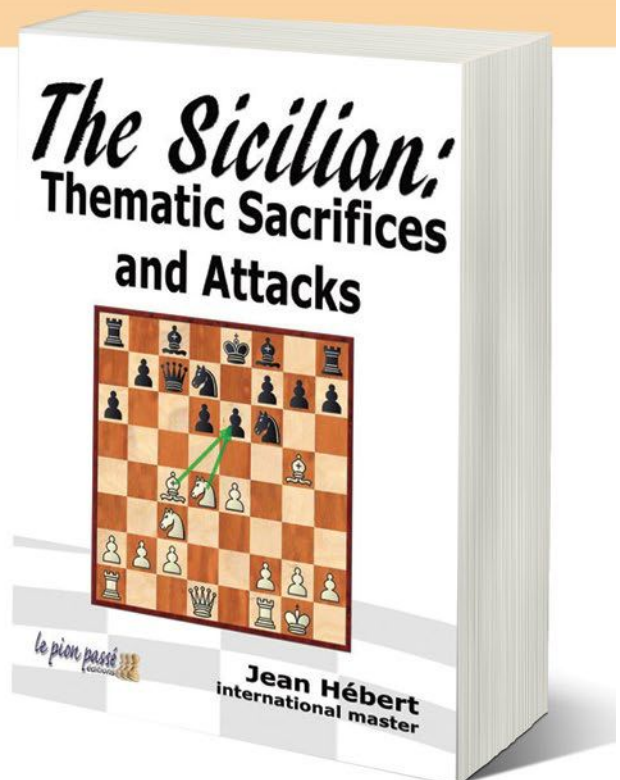
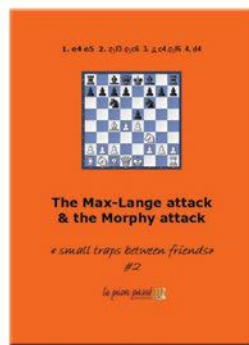
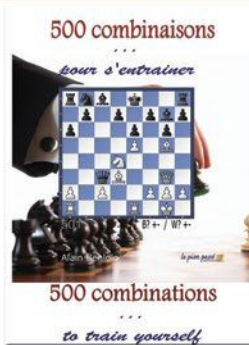
60...e3 Black's last chance but it fails to White's simple reply...

61.♗e7+ ♕b5 62.♗b7+ ♖b6
63.♗xd5+ ♕c4 64.♗f7! exf2+
65.♕xf2 ♗b2+ Now White blocks with a discovered check that ends the game.

66.♗d2+!

Black resigned

Most definitely the big question is: why did Black lose? He didn't accept the pawn sacrifice and had trouble dealing with White's pawn center. Therefore, given the level of aggravation that ensued, I think accepting the sacrifice on move 8 was Black's best reaction. Originally when I saw this pawn sacrifice I thought I would decline it as well. However further inspection has changed my opinion and if I had to face this position I would accept it.



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CHESS TO LEARN.

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It has been a rollercoaster ride for Fabiano Caruana! A brilliant win at the London Classic, then a very disappointing performance at Tata Steel. What should we make of that? Can we now expect him to shine brightly in the forthcoming Candidates tournament?

Fabiano is very erratic in his play. He should be more focused during tournaments. He once was my favorite player.

Kamal Dager,
Venezuela

Of the world's top rated players, any one is capable of winning the next big tournament, or world championship. The competition is stiff: good luck to Fabiano.

Paul Matthews,
Bridgewater, NJ

Fabi has certainly shown he is capable of winning any tournament. His performance at the 2014 Sinquefeld Cup shows that he can play inspired chess. But I do not see him as the favorite for the Candidates' tournament. I would consider Levon Aronian the favorite.

Lucas Anderson,
Houston, TX

When I look back on my own tournaments I understand that a competitor can study variations that might not arise in the current competition. Also physical conditioning can be extremely important.

Douglas Shufelt,
Golden Valley, MN

He is obviously one of the strongest players of the moment but he lacks consistency. He still does not have the stability and maturity necessary to play consistently well at very high levels, and probably still needs to mature from the mental and psychological point of view, where he seems a bit weak. I think this is not his time to become world champion, and even if he did win the Candidates' tournament (although I don't think it's possible) then he would have no chance in a title match and would lose to Carlsen.

Alessandro Marin,
Italy

It's very difficult to maintain consistent form at the highest level in the 21st century, given the extent of preparation and the availability of information. Even Magnus can't do it for prolonged periods. Fabiano has a good a chance as any at the Candidates.

Mark Warriner,
Henrico, VA

Sure, why not. It seems that he has been progressing a lot since he missed out in 2013.

Melvin DuMars,
Normal, IL

This is not uncommon in chess. Despite his inconsistent recent performances I believe Fabiano has an excellent shot at winning the Candidates. He has an even keel personality which should help his nerves. Nerves will be a most important factor in the forthcoming Candidates tournament as all the participants are

80TH TATA STEEL WIJK AAN ZEE TIE-BREAK

	NAME	ELO	2	PTS
1	MAGNUS CARLSEN	1	½	1½
2	ANISH GIRI	0	½	½

80TH TATA STEEL WIJK AAN ZEE; 12TH JAN 2018 - SUN 28TH JAN 2018. CATEGORY: 20. AVE: 2750

RK	NAME	ELO	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	PTS
1	ANISH GIRI	2752	•	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	9
2	MAGNUS CARLSEN	2834	½	•	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	9
3	VLADIMIR KRAMNIK	2787	0	½	•	½	1	½	0	1	1	½	1	1	1	½	8½
4	SHAKHRIYAR MAMEDYAROV	2804	0	½	½	•	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	8½
5	VISWANATHAN ANAND	2767	½	½	0	½	•	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	8
6	WESLEY SO	2792	½	0	½	½	½	•	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	8
7	SERGEY KARJAKIN	2753	½	½	1	½	½	½	•	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	7½
8	PETER SVIDLER	2768	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	•	½	½	½	½	½	1	6
9	WEI YI	2743	½	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	•	1	½	½	½	½	5½
10	GAWAIN JONES	2640	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	•	½	½	1	½	5
11	FABIANO CARUANA	2811	½	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	•	½	½	1	5
12	MAXIM MATLAKOV	2718	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	•	½	1	5
13	BASKARAN ADHIBAN	2655	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	•	½	3½
14	HOU YIFAN	2680	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	•	2½

so close in strength.
Brian Karen,
Levittown, NY

I wish him all the best, but still cannot understand how a Super GM like Caruana did not win a rook and bishop versus rook endgame in the last Candidates tournament.

John Teixeira,
Charlottesville, VA

Yes. He is talented player. And anyone can have a bad tournament.

Robert Pearson,
Fremont, CA

Everyone has their ups and downs. He will recover. Sometimes your opponent plays well too.

Christopher Baumgartner,
Des Plaines, IL

If it is a true roller-coaster ride he should shine at the Candidates.

Patrick Tang,
Plymouth MA

Caruana is a player who always has ups and downs. He should be sharp for the Candidates.

Sebastien Viaud,
France

Every day is a different day. Every game and/or tournament another chance to shine. I sure wouldn't want to show up at this thing without my "A" game. It's impossible to predict who's going to prove to be the hottest.

Greg Kelly,
North Palm Beach, FL

He is a superlative player who consistently tries

to improve. He learns from losses as do we all. Progress is never in a straight line from beginning to end. He will do very well.

Richard Lurye,
Rockville, MD

Streaks in any sports are overrated!

Mehran Divanbaigzand,
McLean, VA

Yes. Everyone has up and down performances. He will shine in the Candidates where so much is at stake.

David Cofer,
Irving, TX

Disappointing performances are expected from time to time, I don't expect this temporary downturn to unduly impact his performance in the Candidates

Gordon Alexander,
Kings Bay Base, GA

Of course. Remember the last Candidates and his game against Karjakin. A



Fabiano Caruana, London Chess Classic 2017.
Photo by Lennart Oates.

little more concentration and he would have been the title challenger to Carlsen!

Philippe Chappé,
France

Sure we should! He is, with Aronian, one of the the most brilliant players of our time.

Patrick Sitbon,
France

Fabi has always had the tools but lacks

consistency. He should play to his strengths and work harder to improve his weaknesses. Show more passion and a stronger determination to win.

Manuel Infante,
Oklahoma City, OK

Do not underestimate Fabiano's potential. He is still a young player who has not yet actualized his fullest potential.

Jeremy Treadwell,
Bakersfield, CA

9TH LONDON CLASSIC 2017 TIE-BREAK

NAME	ELO	1	2	3	4	PTS
1 FABIANO CARUANA	2799	½	½	½	1	2½
2 IAN NEPOMNIACHTCHI	2729	½	½	½	0	1½

9TH LONDON CLASSIC 2017 LONDON ENG 29TH NOV 2017 - 11TH DEC 2017

RK	NAME	ELO	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	PTS
1	FABIANO CARUANA	2799	•	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	6
2	IAN NEPOMNIACHTCHI	2729	½	•	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	6
3	MAGNUS CARLSEN	2837	½	0	•	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	5
4	MAXIME VACHIER-LAGRAVE	2789	½	½	½	•	½	½	½	1	½	½	5
5	WESLEY SO	2788	½	½	½	½	•	½	½	½	1	½	5
6	HIKARU NAKAMURA	2781	½	½	½	½	½	•	½	½	½	½	4½
7	LEVON ARONIAN	2805	½	½	0	½	½	½	•	½	½	½	4
8	SERGEY KARJAKIN	2760	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	•	½	½	3½
9	VISWANATHAN ANAND	2782	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	•	½	3
10	MICHAEL ADAMS	2715	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	•	3

CARUANA UNRECOGNIZABLE IN WIJK AAN ZEE

SO WHAT COULD POSSIBLY HAVE GONE WRONG?

Fabiano Caruana. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

CHESS IS SUCH A TOUGH SPORT THAT FABIANO CARUANA CAN SCORE 6/9 IN THE LONDON CLASSIC AND A MONTH LATER ONLY MAKE 5/13 IN THE TATA STEEL.

by **GM PRIYADHARSHAN KANNAPPAN**

Fabiano Caruana	2811
Gawain Jones	2640

Round 2, Wijk aan Zee 2018

At the highest level, chess competitions tend to field a very similar line-up of players, tournament after tournament, so we cannot say that Fabiano Caruana had no time to prepare after his Christmas and New Year celebrations.

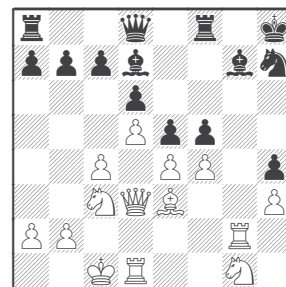
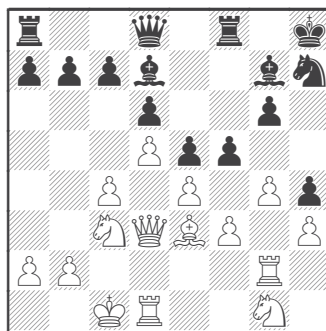
Was he hiding his opening preparation for the Candidates tournament, or was it just a bad tournament combined with a lot of calculational and/or strategic oversights?

The first big mistake in Caruana's play came in Round 2 against Gawain Jones.

The King's Indian Defense is well known for its wild positions, and at

this critical moment, when White can take on f5 with the e- or g-pawn, I am pretty sure that on a good day Caruana would capture with the g-pawn without thinking for a second, as in such positions it is important to expose the opponent's king – to set the board on fire!

16.exf5 The continuation 16.gxf5 gxf5 17.f4! seems too scary, because why would you open up your position, when your opponent has the advantage of the two bishops? Well, the reason is that Black is seriously lagging behind in development and opening up the position would exploit that weakness.



For example:

A) 17...♔e7 18.♖f3 fxe4 19.♗xe4 ♖g8 20.♗e5 wins.

B) 17...exf4 18.♖xg7! Removing the most vital defender in Black's position 18...♗xg7 19.♗d4+ ♗h6 20.e5! c5 21.dxc6 ♗xc6 22.exd6 ♗g5 23.♗e5± and Black's weak dark squares and exposed king, combined with the far advanced pawn on d6, greatly favors White.

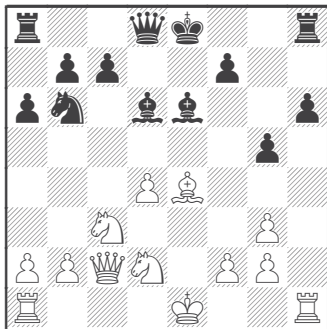
C) 17...fxe4 18.♗xe4 ♗f5 19.fxe5 ♗xe5 20.♗d4!±.

16...gxf5 White is still better, but there were quite a few more missed opportunities and eventually the game ended peacefully on move 69.

Let's continue with the most significant blunder by Caruana in the event.

Sergey Karjakin	2753
Fabiano Caruana	2811

Round 7, Wijk aan Zee 2018



17...♔e7?? In his interview on the official tournament website, Caruana mentions how he completely missed this move, which is an absolute shocker for a player of his high standing! My best guess is that subconsciously he believed that ♗xb7 would fail to ...♗d5+ but missed ♗f1 to be followed by ♖e1. Correct was 17...c6 18.0-0-0 ♖f6 19.d5 cxd5 20.♗xd5 ♗xd5 21.♗de4 ♗f4+ 22.♗b1 ♗xc3+ 23.bxc3 ♖e5 24.gxf4 gxf4 25.♖h5±.

18.♗xb7 ♖b8 Again, 18...♗d5+? 19.♗f1 ♗xb7 20.♖e1 wins, while 18...♗f5+ 19.♗de4 ♖b8 20.♗c6+ ♗f8 21.0-0 still

leaves White with a clear advantage.

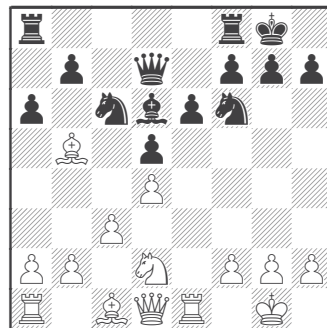
19.♗c6+ White could also have been greedy and played 19.♗xa6 ♗f5+ 20.♗ce4 with a winning position.

19...♗f8 20.0-0 ♖f6 21.♗f3 and White went on to win in 46 moves.

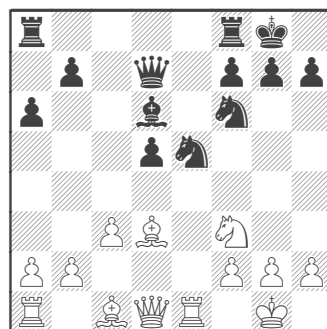
Some of the mistakes made by Caruana in Tata Steel would come under the category of strategic oversights. Playing with a particular plan in mind, and then abandoning it halfway through the idea, can be seen from the following examples.

Vladimir Kramnik	2787
Fabiano Caruana	2811

Round 12, Wijk aan Zee 2018

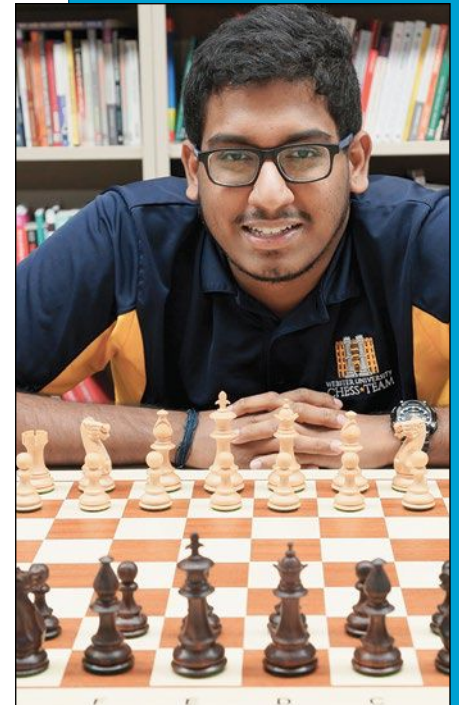


12.♗d3 e5!? 13.dxe5 ♗xe5 14.♗f3



14...♗fg4? Why would you further weaken your isolated d5 pawn, by making an unnecessary knight jump? I believe that Black saw some vague ideas related to the creation of active counterplay against the white king, and also in the potential to liquidate to a drawn endgame.

Best was 14...♖fe8 since natural moves tend to be good for the very



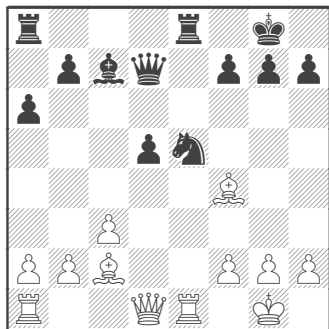
Priyadharshan Kannappan is an Indian grandmaster, living in St. Louis for the past six years. He did his BS Marketing from Lindenwood University and will be graduating soon with an MA in Management and Leadership, with a certificate in Business Analytics from Webster University. He has donned various hats within the chess community as a player, commentator, writer, manager. You can learn more about him in www.priyadharshan.com

reason that they are in harmony with the nature of the position! 15.♗g5 ♗e4 16.♗xe4 dxe4 17.♗xe5 ♖xe5 18.♗f4 ♖e6 19.♖d5±. An alternative would be 14...♗xd3!? 15.♖xd3 h6 16.♗e3 ♖fe8 17.g3± but this is not a fun position to have with the black pieces, due to the

isolated d5 pawn and the strong outpost for White on d4.

15. dxe5 dxe5 15... dxe5 16. h3 d2+ 17. f1 d5 18. e2+ with good chances that Black may lose either the bishop on h2 or one of his pawns in the next few moves.

16. c2 fe8 17. f4 c7

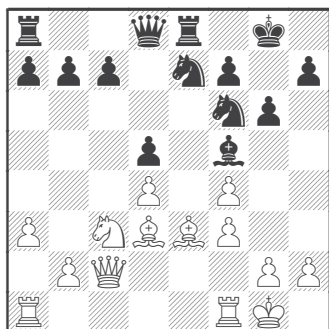


18.g3! Kramnik is in no hurry to capture the pawn by 18. fxh7+ gxh7 19. fxe5 fxe5 20. h5+ g8 21. fxe5 b5 , as he understands how bad Black's position is. Instead he decides to improve his own position before going after the pawn.

18... ad8 19. fxh7+ gxh7 20. fxe5 fxe5 21. h5+ g8 22. fxe5 and White went on to convert his extra pawn.

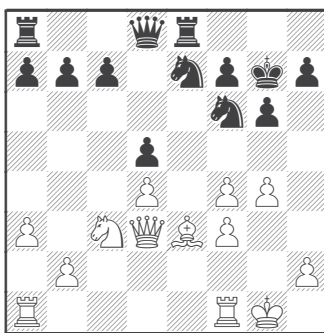
Fabiano Caruana	2811
Wesley So	2792

Round 4, Wijk aan Zee 2018



15.g4! The natural plan for White is to endeavor to play f4-f5 and exploit the weak dark squares on the kingside.

15... xd3 16. xd3 g7



17. fae1! If you miss your chance to seize the initiative, your opponent will try to grab it instead! After the correct 17.f5 gxf5 18.f4 d6 19.fxf5 dxf4 20.fxf4 c6 21.fae1+ White will maneuver his knight to f5 and have a dominating position.

17... d7 18. f2 h5 and the game ended in a draw after 48 moves.

When you have a streak of two or three games filled with analytical oversights, you start doubting your ability to calculate correctly. But a lack of confidence, combined with strong opposition trying to exploit your slump in form, is no reason for taking a quick

draw and leaving the tournament hall as early as possible.

When we analyze Caruana's Tata performance based on color, we see he scored 3/6 with the white pieces, which consisted of all draws, whereas from the black side he managed to score only 2/7, with one win, two draws, and four losses. The popular perception that it is better to start with the white pieces seems to be the case judging from this small sample of games, but apparently having the advantage of the first move didn't have any real impact, as the mistakes crept in mainly in the middlegame.

C42

Viswanathan Anand	2767
Fabiano Caruana	2811

Round 3, Wijk aan Zee 2018

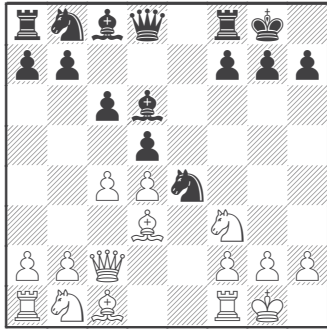
1.e4 e5 2.d3 f6 This was the tenth time Caruana had employed the Petroff, according to my database, and in general the Petroff had served him well with a solid 50% score, but this game was to change the statistics slightly in favor of White!

3. dxe5 d6 4. d3 dxe4 5. d4 d5 6. d3 d6 7. 0-0 0-0 8. c4 c6 9. c2

▼ Visy Anand, Wijk aan Zee 2018.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.



Having tried ♖e1 and ♖c3 in his previous attempts against Caruana, and gaining no advantage, this time Anand places his bets on 9.♗c2.

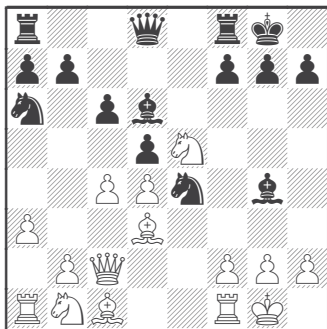


9...♖a6 The most principled response in this position, trying to exploit the drawback of having the queen on c2.

10.a3 Grabbing the pawn isn't advisable as 10.♙xe4?! dxe4 11.♗xe4 ♖e8 12.♗d3 ♖b4 13.♗b3 ♙f5 14.♖a3 a5 leaves Black's active pieces and bishop pair providing ample compensation for the pawn, as in the quickly drawn game, V.Svoboda 1968 - L.Vlasak 1875, Sec u Chrudimi 2005.

10...♙g4 The other popular continuation, which also faced some opening issues, is 10...f5 11.♖c3 ♖c7 12.♙e3! ♗h8 13.c5 ♙e7 14.♖e2 ♙f6 15.♖e5± when White had some space advantage, as in P.Idani 2578 - B.Jobava 2714, Bandar e Anzali 2017.

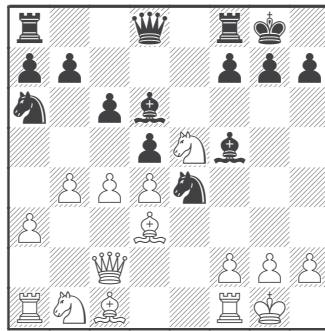
11.♖e5



11...♙f5 Caruana follows established theory since the alternatives 11...♙xe5 and 11...♙h5 are dubious. I am baffled to see 275+ games in this line for Black, as it seems to be a nasty variation where White wins easily, unless Black can make a draw with herculean efforts: 11...♙xe5

12.dxe5 ♖ac5 13.f3 ♖xd3 14.♗xd3 ♖c5 15.♗d4 ♖b3 16.♗xg4 ♖xa1 17.♙h6 g6 18.♖c3 ♗b6+ 19.♗h1 ♗xb2 20.♗f4 with a strong initiative; or 11...♙h5 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.♖c3 ♖xc3 14.bxc3 ♗h8 15.f4 ♙xe5 16.fxe5± as in G.Kasparov 2849 - A.Shirov 2718, Wijk aan Zee 2001.

12.b4 The idea is to expand on the queenside and also stop the black knight on a6 coming to c5 after an exchange on e5.



12...♖c7!? A new move according to the database, and one that seems like a home cooked novelty, as Caruana didn't spend any time in blitzing it out. The main move is 12...f6, which fails to equalize for Black.

Nevertheless 12...c5!? needs to be analyzed deeply as it has the potential to equalize for Black: 13.f3 ♙xe5 14.dxe5 dxc4 15.♙xe4 ♗d4+ 16.♗f2 ♙xe4 17.♗xd4 cxd4 18.fxe4 c3 leaves T.Skovgaard 2366 - D.Eilmes 2349, ICCF email 2006.

When I saw this rarely played move in my database, I was immediately reminded of the game V.Topalov 2752 - R.Kasimdzhanov 2684, London 2012.



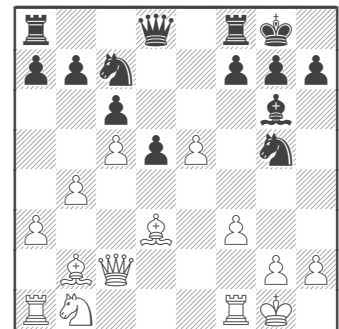
where Black played the unbelievable break 12...c5!?

13.f3 Another complicated try, possibly leading to a concrete variation, is 13.♖c3 ♖e8 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.f3 ♖e6! 16.fxe4 dxe4 17.♖xf7 exd3 18.♖xd8 dxc2 19.♖xb7 ♙c7 20.♗xf5 ♖xd4 21.♗f1 ♖b3 22.♗a2 ♙b6+ 23.♖c5 ♖xc5 24.♖d5! (24. bxc5? ♙xc5+ 25.♗h1 ♗f8 26.♗f3 ♗ae8) 24...♖b3+ 25.♖xb6 axb6 26.♗xc2 ♖xc1 27.♗fx1 ♗xa3 28.♗c8 ♗ae3 29.♗xe8+ ♗xe8= 30.♗c6 ♖e1+ 31.♗f2 ♖b1 32.♗xb6.

13...♙g6 Or 13...♙xe5 14.dxe5 ♙g6 15.♙e3 ♖g5 16.f4 ♙xd3 17.♗xd3 ♖e4 18.♗d1±.

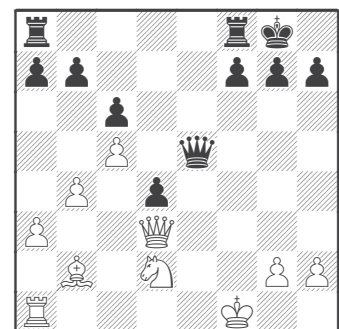
14.c5 Best is 14.cxd5 ♙xe5 15.dxe5 ♗xd5 16.♙b2 ♖g5 17.♙xg6 hxg6 18.♖d2 ♖ge6 19.♖c4±.

14...♙xe5 15.dxe5 ♖g5 16.♙b2



16...d4?? Going for a very direct and concrete approach – which fails! 16...♙xd3 17.♗xd3 a5 18.♖d2 ♖ge6 19.f4 axb4 20.axb4 ♗xa1 21.♙xa1 leaves Black with a passive but very solid position. Exchanges always help in a cramped position, so to be considered was 16...a5 17.f4 ♙xd3 18.♗xd3 ♖e4 19.♖d2 axb4 20.axb4 ♗xa1 21.♗xa1 ♖xd2 22.♗xd2 ♗d7∞.

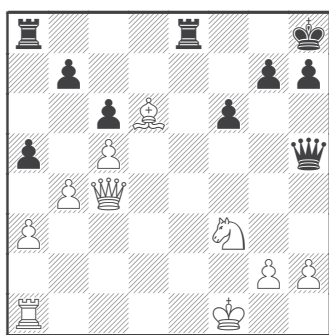
17.f4 ♖d5 18.fxg5 ♖e3 19.♗d2 ♙xd3 20.♗xd3 ♖xf1 21.♗xf1± ♗xg5 22.♖d2 ♗xe5



23.♘f3?! White slackens a bit, which gives Black chances of counterplay. More incisive was 23.♘c4!? ♖xh2 24.♖xd4 f6 25.♘d6± when the white knight on d6 completely dominates the position.

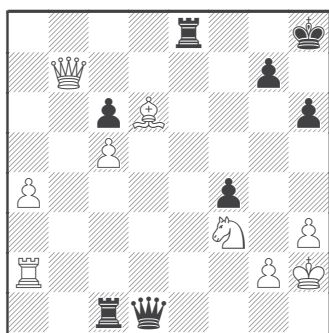
23...♖h5 24.♖xd4 f6 25.♖c4+ ♔h8 26.♙c1? It makes more sense to play the most natural move 26.♙d1 and if 26...♙fd8 27.♙e1 ♙e8 then 28.♙c3 maintains a slight advantage.

26...♙fe8 27.♙f4 a5 28.♙d6



28...axb4?? This was the final mistake of the game. Things are messy after 28...♙e3! 29.bxa5 ♙xa5 30.a4 ♙a8 31.a5 ♙ae8, but White definitely has the better chances.

29.♖xb4 ♖d5 30.♖xb7 h6 31.♔g1 ♙a4 32.h3 ♙c4 33.♖b2 ♖d3 34.♙a2 ♖d1+ 35.♔h2 ♙c1 36.a4 f5 37.♖b7 f4



38.♙xf4 ♙xc5 39.♙d2 ♖xa4 40.♖f7 ♙g8 41.♙e5 ♖c4 42.♙d6! An aesthetic way to finish the game.

Black resigned

Opening wise, Caruana played everything with the white pieces: 1.e4, 1.d4, 1.c4. If I had to make a guess, whether

Caruana was hiding his preparation for the Candidates, I would say “No” as opening novelties at elite level are like Guacamole, if you don’t use them in time someone else will make an avocado toast with it in a matter of days.

His opening choices as Black also don’t offer much of a surprise, as he stuck to lines in which he has had considerable experience, except for the game Karjakin - Caruana, where he tested out 4...a6 in the Queen’s Gambit Declined.

D30

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov 2804

Fabiano Caruana 2811

Round 5, Wijk aan Zee 2018

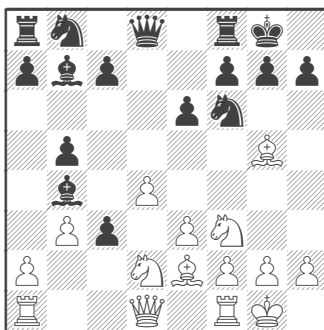
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♙g5!?

A slight surprise from Mamedyarov, as he usually prefers to play ♘c3 in this position

4...♙b4+ 5.♘bd2 dxc4 6.e3 b5

Too greedy but after 6...c3?! 7.bxc3 ♙xc3 8.♙c1± White has a huge lead in development.

7.♙e2 ♙b7 8.0-0 0-0 9.b3 c3



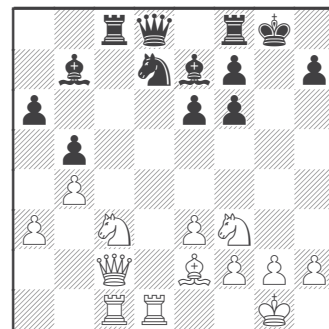
10.a3 A new move according to my database. Previously seen is 10.♘b1 h6 11.♙xf6 ♖xf6 12.a3 ♙e7 13.♘xc3∞.

10...♙e7 11.♘b1 c5 12.♘xc3 a6 13.dxc5 ♙xc5 White’s position is more comfortable to play, as there are no apparent weaknesses and he also has a slight lead in development.

14.♖c2 ♘bd7 15.♙fd1 ♙c8 16.♙xf6!? Complicating matters by breaking

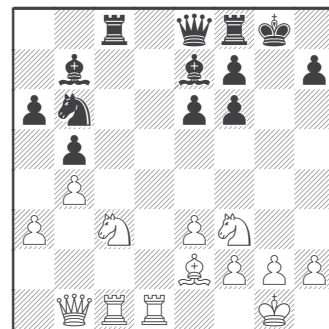
up the opponent’s pawn structure. If White had wanted to maintain equality, he would have gone for 16.b4 ♙e7 17.♖b2=.

16...gxf6 17.b4 ♙e7 18.♙ac1



18...♖e8?! The queen is awkwardly placed on e8, where it also hampers defensive ideas for Black, since the ♙f8 would like to go to d8, and clear the f8 square for the minor pieces. Better was 18...♙c7 19.♖b2 ♖b8±.

19.♖b1 ♘b6



20.♘d4! I like White’s idea of exchanging the light squared bishops to relieve the pressure on kingside.

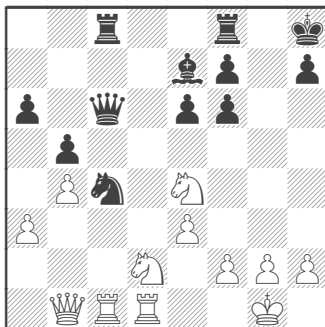
20...♔h8 21.♙f3 ♙xf3 22.♘xf3 ♘c4∞ This is a strategically rich position, with both sides having their own plans in the presence of an asymmetrical pawn structure on the kingside.

23.♘e4 The idea is to defend a3 and at the same time keep an eye on f6. 23.♖a1!? ♖c6 24.♘e2 ♙fd8 25.♙xd8+ ♙xd8 26.♘g3 ♙d3 27.a4 ♖d5 28.axb5 axb5∞.

23...♖c6 24.♘fd2

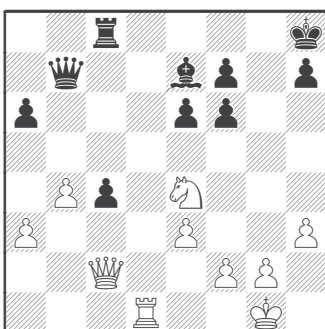


▲ Shakhriyar Mamedyarov,
Wijk aan Zee 2018.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.



24...♔b7? Black unnecessarily creates a weakness on c4, which will lead to his downfall. Moreover, in my opinion, this was the turning point of the game. The only move was 24...♖xd2 25.♗xd2 ♔b7 26.♗b3 ♖xc1 27.♖xc1 ♖c8=.

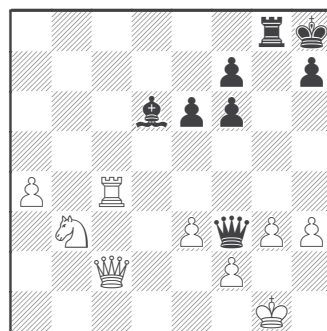
25.♗xc4 ♖xc4 26.♖xc4 bxc4 27.♔c2 ♖c8 28.h3



28...♔c6? Better was 28...♗g8 but then White plays 29.♖d4 in order to swing his rook to g4 or h4 and harass the black king.

29.♖d4 a5 30.♗d2 ♖g8 31.g3 axb4 32.♖xc4 b3 Better was 32...♔d5 33.axb4 ♖b8 34.♗e4 ♗g7 35.♗c5±.

33.♗xb3 ♔f3 34.a4 ♗d6



35.♖c8 Simple! The text move avoids complications that may arise after any ...♗xg3 sacrifice.

35...♖xc8 36.♔xc8+ ♗g7 37.♔c2 ♗b4 38.♔c4 ♔b7 39.a5 ♗d6 40.a6 ♔b6 41.♗d4 ♔a5 42.♗g2 ♔a3 43.♔c6

Black resigned

I remember one of my coaches telling me that it is crucial to continue playing and not withdraw from a tournament when you are having a terrible time.

KING'S INDIAN & GRÜNfeld
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QUALITY CHESS

This enables you to get over it as soon as possible, instead of letting any depressed state of mind spill over and spoil your next tournament too! Let's hope that bad times will come to an end in Tata Steel for Caruana, then we can look forward to some sunshine in his game in the future. Overall, this is nothing much really to worry about, as the tide always turns, and the fact that Caruana had a bad Tata Steel result will surely make him more focused and determined to deliver an exceptional performance in the forthcoming Candidates in Berlin!

MAGNUS CARLSEN SHOWS WORLD CHAMPION CLASS AT TATA STEEL

Federer of Chess WINS Wimbledon of Chess!

OUR REPORT FROM WIJK AAN ZEE COMES FROM THE PEN OF THE FIRST EVER AFRICAN PLAYER TO REACH 2700 ELO, GM BASSEM AMIN. WHO TIED FOR 3RD PLACE IN GROUP B. JUST AFTER THE EVENT, WHILE WRITING THIS ARTICLE, BASSEM, A MEDICAL DOCTOR FROM EGYPT, BECAME A PROUD DAD FOR THE FIRST TIME, CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF HIS NEW DAUGHTER LARA!

By **GM BASSEM AMIN**

Tata Steel, one of the most prestigious chess tournaments in the world, celebrated its 80th edition this year.

I was honored to be invited to take part in this historical event and compete in the very strong challengers group which was eventually won by Indian GM Vidit, who deservedly earned his place in next year's Grandmaster tournament.

GROUP A

Everyone who followed the A Group was provided with entertainment as the lead changed hands many times between Giri, Mamedyarov and Carlsen, who were closely chased by Kramnik and Anand. Finally the tournament ended in a tie between Giri and Carlsen, who eventually won the tiebreaker 1½-½.

In my opinion the following game was a turning point in Carlsen's tournament because any result other than a full point against the bottom seed player would have left him way behind the leaders, Giri and Mamedyarov.



Magnus Carlsen. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

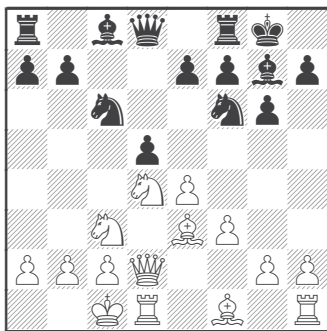
B76

Magnus Carlsen	2834
Gawain Jones	2640

Round 8, Wijk aan Zee 2018

1.e4 c5 Before this game, Jones was on 50% and playing very solid chess, especially with the white pieces. But here he surprised the world champion by going for the Sicilian.

2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♟f6 5.♞c3 g6 6.♞e3 ♞g7 7.f3 ♞c6 8.♞d2 0-0 9.0-0-0 d5

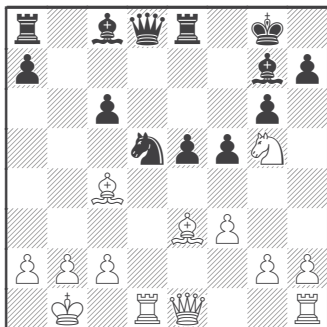


10.♞e1!? Also possible is 10.exd5!? ♞xd5 11.♞xc6 bxc6 12.♞d4; 10.♞b1!? ♞xd4 11.e5 ♟f5 12.exf6 ♞xf6 13.♞xd5 ♞xd5 14.♞xd5 ♞xe3 15.♞d2 ♞xd1 16.♞xd1 ♞e6.

10...e5 11.♞xc6 bxc6 12.exd5 ♞xd5 13.♞c4 ♞e6 14.♞b1 14.♞e4 can be met by 14...♞c7 15.♞c5 ♞fd8.

14...♞e8 Many complications would arise after 14...♞b8!? 15.♞e4 f5 16.♞xa7 ♞e7.

15.♞e4 f5 16.♞g5 ♞c8 Jones was still in his preparation and has even written a book on the Dragon so he knew what he was doing. On the other hand Carlsen had spent about 30 minutes up to this point.



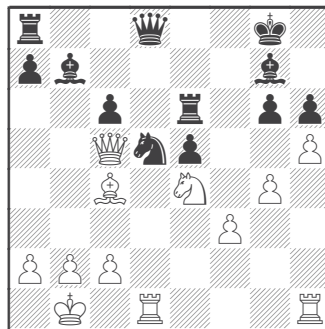
17.g4?? Shockingly, the World Champion

blunders a piece in one move!! 17.h4!? was the better continuation. **17...f4! 18.h4!** The best way to obtain compensation and keep the game going.

18...fxe3 19.♞xe3 h6 20.♞c5! A very important move which forces Black to develop his bishop on b7 and not e6.

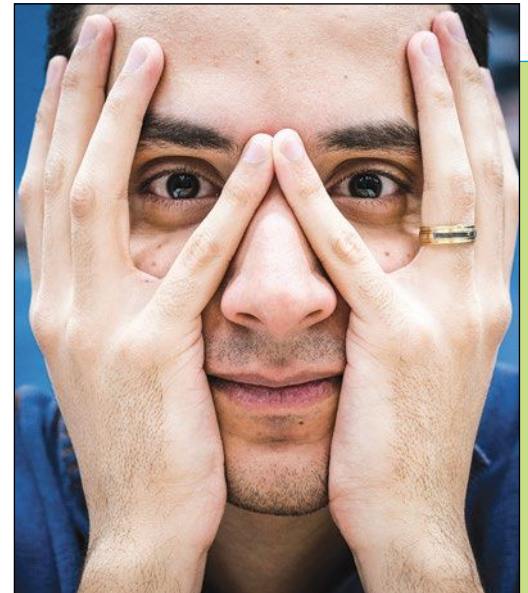
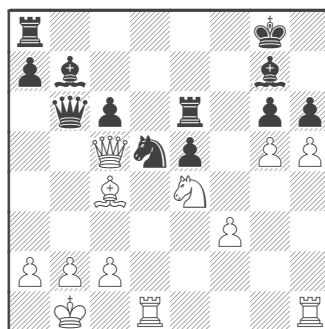
20...♞b7 21.♞e4 ♞e6?! The first inaccuracy by Black, who should have made the important defensive move 21...♞h8, bringing his king to safety and freeing his knight from the pin by the white bishop on c4. I believe Jones was worried about 22.♞d6 but then he could play the very important move 22...♞e7! This would solve Black's problems by protecting all his weaknesses, thereby leaving him with a winning advantage.

22.h5!? Maybe 22.g5! was a bit better but Black still has the advantage after 22...h5.



22...♞b6? I believe this was the losing move for Black. Better was 22...g5! 23.♞b3 ♞f8 24.♞f2 ♞b6 when White has too little compensation for his material deficit.

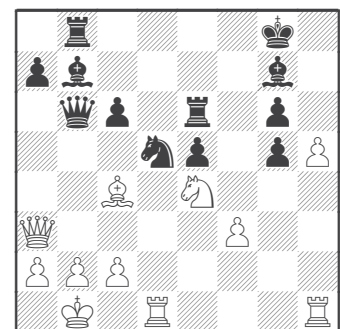
23.g5! Now White really gets back in the game as the kingside is opened up and Black's king is in danger.



Bassem Amin is the first Grandmaster from Africa to cross the 2700-barrier. He is the African Champion for 2017 (for the 4th time), and this is only one of his many successes. In 2012 he graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at Tanta University.

23...hgx5? To be considered was 23...♞f8!?, trying to force an exchange of queens. Then White best replies 24.♞xb6 axb6 25.gxh6. On the other hand, after 24.♞g1 ♞xg1 25.♞dxg1, although Black maintains his material advantage and exchanges queens, his exposed king is at risk due to White's active pieces.

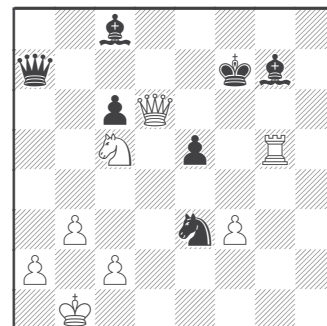
24.♞a3 ♞b8





▶ Playing hall, Wijk aan Zee 2018.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

37...♔a7? This loses but so does
37...♖f8 38.♙xc6 ♜b7 39.♙g6 etc.
38.♙e6+ ♖f8 39.♙g5 ♜e3
40.♙d6+ ♖f7 41.♜c5 ♜c8



42.♙xg7+!

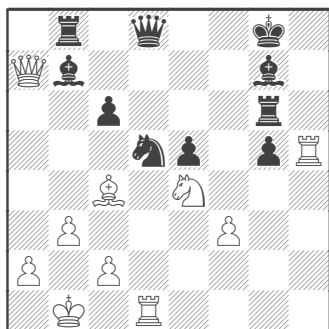
Black resigned

25.b3 Possible is 25.♜xg5!? ♜f8 26.♙d3 ♜a6 27.b3 ♜xc4 28.♙xc4 ♜d6 29.♜e4 ♜e6 30.♜g5=.

25...♙d8? Another dubious move which gives White the advantage. Correct was 25...gxh5 26.♙xh5 ♙g6.

26.♙xa7 The World Champion takes both a pawn and the initiative – which he quickly converts to a full point.

26...gxh5? This makes it easier for White to break through. To be considered were either 26...♙e7!? or 26...♜h6!?.
27.♙xh5 ♙g6

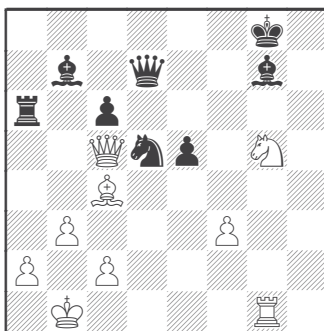


28.♙xg5! Although Black is still a piece up, White is winning.

28...♙xg5 29.♜xg5 The rook on b8 is hanging.

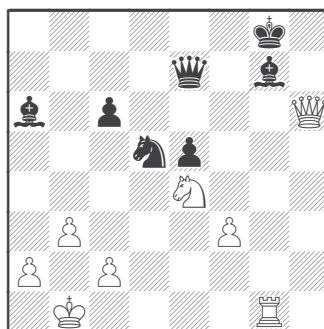
29...♙c8 30.♙g1! A simple but very strong move.

30...♙a8 31.♙b6 ♙a6 32.♙c5 ♙d7



33.♜e4 Threatening a lethal fork on f6. White is in no hurry to take the rook on a6.

33...♜h8 34.♙f2 ♙e7 35.♜xa6 35.♙g3! ♙a8 36.♙g6 is a quicker win.
35...♜xa6 36.♙h2+ ♜g8 37.♙h6



GROUP B

As soon as I arrived in Wijk aan Zee I immediately felt that the town was simply breathing chess and wherever I went I saw chess posters, books, photos of players, etc. It was a great feeling to be there and I had high hopes of winning this “Challengers” event and thereby qualifying to play in the Grandmaster tournament the following year.

However, as it happened, I had a bad start in the tournament. I drew my first two games against Harika and Erwin L’Ami and then in the third round I had the white pieces against Indian GM Vidit, the top seed in the tournament – while I was the second! I tried very hard to win but unfortunately got quite short of time and lost my advantage in time pressure, after which I was unable to hold the endgame.

Of course this was a big disappointment for me but then the next day came a further upset. I was playing the bottom seed, Lucas van Forest, so hoped to bounce back after my defeat and again went all out for a win, introducing an interesting novelty in the Two Knights Defense and sacrificing first three pawns and then a piece! I got a winning position, but then again in time pressure I missed

my chances and found myself in a lost position after 40 moves.

I was now on 1 out of 4 and realized it would be very difficult to play for first place so decided to just try to improve my results and not lose many rating points. In this respect it was very important for me that I won a brilliant game against Dmitry Gordievski in the fifth round with an opening novelty and a double pawn sacrifice. Then, after a couple of draws, I played the leader Korobov.

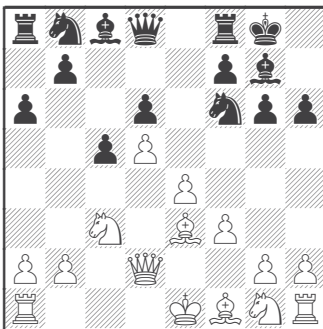
A65

Anton Korobov	2652
Bassem Amin	2693

Round 8, B Group, Wijk aan Zee 2018

1.d4 Entering this game as the tournament leader with 6 out of 7, a full point ahead of the field, Anton was in great form and had won all his games so far with the white pieces.

1...d5 2.c4 g6 I chose the KID as my tournament placing was not good at this stage and I needed to play for a win.
3.dxc3 g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.g5
6...e3 is the main move.
6...c5 7.d5 h6 8.e3 e6 9.0-0 exd5 10.cxd5 a6



11.a4 11...exh6?! dxe4 12.dxe4
13.g3 13...hxh6 14.0-0 hxh6
15.dxd6 d7

11...h5 11...b7?! allows
12.h3!±. In many variations White has to play d2-g3-h1-f2 to support the e4 pawn and play f3-f4, but now he can get to f2 in only two moves!

12.dge2 d7 13.d1 d5
14.e2 d7 A typical idea in these Benoni structures. Black prepares to play ...f7-f5.

15.h3?! Possible is 15.0-0 f5

16.f4!? but then ...d4 is an option which is why Anton started with h3.

15...f5 16.f4 d7 17.exf5!? A novelty in place of 17.e5 dxe5 18.xc5 e8 19.0-0.

17...gxf5? The h5 pawn is permanently weak now. Correct is 17...xf5!± 18.0-0 (18.g4? d7) 18...d7.

18.0-0 d6 19.f2 d7 20.a5 b5!?
20...d8 21.h4 d6 22.g5±.

21.e1 e8 22.c2 22.f3!?

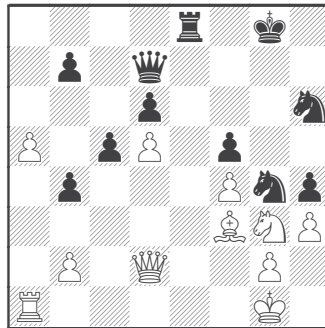
22...d7 23.f3! It is very important for White to keep this bishop as it exerts pressure on h5 and controls the e4 square.

23...xe1+ 24.xe1 e8 25.d1e2
d4! 26.dxb5 axb5? Better is 26...xb5! 27.c3 d3 28.c1 h4.

27.c3 d6 27...d3 could be considered.

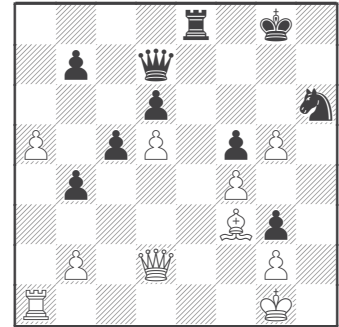
28.d3 xc3 29.xc3 29.bxc3!±.

29...b4 30.d2 h4



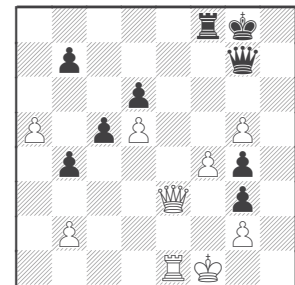
31.hxg4? The calm retreat 31.d1! gives White very big advantage. I think I would have replied 31...g7 (31...d6 32.g2) even if I don't believe Black has compensation after 32.hxg4 fxg4 33.d1+-.

31...hxg3 32.g5



32...g7! My opponent missed this move in his calculations before taking on g4. Now the game suddenly swings in my favor. Anton expected 32...h7 when he is winning after 33.e1 xe1+ 34.xe1 d7 35.xg3.

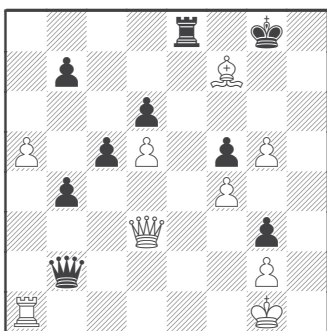
33.h5? 33.d1! was perhaps the last chance for White to save the game but the resulting rook ending was so difficult to evaluate over the board even though he is two pawns down at some point! Play might continue 33...d4 34.xg4 fxg4 35.e1 f8 36.e3



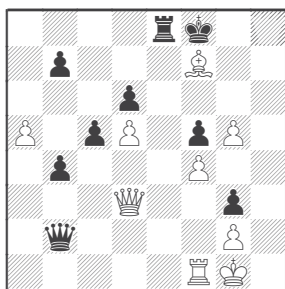
36...xf7 (36...xg5 37.e6+ h8

80 TH TATA STEEL WIJK AAN ZEE 12 TH JAN 2018 - 28 TH JAN 2018. CATEGORY: 15. AVE: 2612																	
RK	NAME	ELO	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	PTS
1	GUJRATHI VIDIT	2718	•	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	9
2	ANTON KOROBV	2652	½	•	½	0	1	0	1	½	1	1	½	½	½	1	8
3	JEFFERY XIONG	2634	½	½	•	½	½	½	1	1	½	0	1	½	½	½	7½
4	BASSEM AMIN	2693	0	1	½	•	½	1	½	½	½	½	0	1	½	1	7½
5	JORDEN VAN FOREEST	2629	½	0	½	½	•	½	0	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	7½
6	DMITRY GORDIEVSKY	2622	0	1	½	0	½	•	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	7½
7	MATTHIAS BLUEBAUM	2640	½	0	0	½	1	½	•	½	½	½	1	½	1	0	6½
8	ERWIN L'AMI	2634	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	•	½	½	½	½	½	½	6
9	BENJAMIN BOK	2607	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	•	½	1	½	½	½	6
10	ARYAN TARI	2599	½	0	1	½	0	½	½	½	½	•	0	½	½	1	6
11	LUCAS VAN FOREEST	2481	½	½	0	1	0	0	0	½	0	1	•	½	½	1	5½
12	MICHAL KRASENKOW	2671	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	•	½	1	5½
13	HARIKA DRONAVALLI	2497	0	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	•	½	5
14	OLGA GIRYA	2489	0	0	½	0	½	0	1	½	½	0	0	0	½	•	3½

38. ♖xd6 ♖xf4+ 39. ♖xf4 ♖xf4+ 40. ♔e2!=) 37. ♖e6! ♖xe6 38. dxe6 (38. ♖xe6 ♖xf4+ 39. ♔e1 ♖f2+) 38... ♖xf4+ 39. ♔e2! ♔f8 40. ♔e3 ♖f5 41. ♖h1!∞ I guess accurately calculating all of these lines is virtually impossible; 33. ♖e1?? would be a terrible blunder because of 33... ♖d4+ winning at once. 33... ♔f7 34. ♖d3 Threatening both the g3 and f5 pawns. 34... ♖xb2! 35. ♔xf7+ Or 35. ♖f1 ♖h8! 36. ♔xf7+ ♔xf7 37. ♖xg3 (37. ♖xf5+ ♔e7 38. ♖e6+ ♔d8 39. ♖xd6+ ♔c8 40. ♖xc5+ ♔b8 41. ♖c1 b3 42. ♖b1 ♖e2-+) 37... ♖d4+ 38. ♖f2 b3 winning for Black.

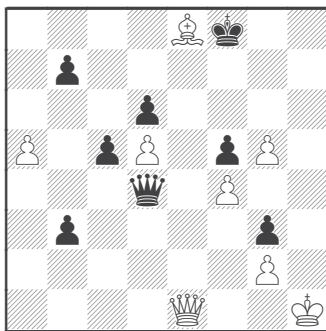


35... ♔g7! Not 35... ♔xf7? 36. ♖xf5+ ♔g7 37. ♖d7+ ♔f8 38. ♖f5+ ♔g8 39. ♖g6+ ♔f8 40. ♖f5+. Or 35... ♔f8?! 36. ♖f1



...with the following options:

A) 36... ♖e1? 37. ♖xg3 ♖d4+ 38. ♖f2 ♖xf2+ 39. ♔xf2 ♖xf1+ 40. ♔xf1 ♔xf7 (but not 40... b3?? 41. ♔e6 winning).
B) 36... ♖e2!? 37. ♖xg3 ♔xf7+.
C) 36... ♖h8!? 37. ♔h5 ♖xh5 38. ♖xg3+.
36. ♔xe8 The variation 36. ♖f1 ♖e1! 37. ♖xg3 ♖d4+ 38. ♖f2 ♖xf2+ 39. ♔xf2 ♖xf1+ 40. ♔xf1 b3 41. ♔e6 ♔g6 shows why ... ♔g7 is better than ... ♔f8.
36... ♖xa1+ 37. ♖f1 ♖d4+ 38. ♔h1 b3 39. ♖e1 ♔f8 Preventing all counterplay by White's queen and opening the diagonal for ... ♖h8+.



40. ♔h5 Or 40. ♔g6 ♖h8+ 41. ♔g1 ♖h2+ 42. ♔f1 ♖h1+ 43. ♔e2 ♖xg2+ 44. ♔e3 ♖e4+ 45. ♔d2 ♖c2+ 46. ♔e3 b2 47. ♔f3 ♖f2+ 48. ♖xf2 gxf2 and Black wins.
40... ♖e4

White resigned

For me this was a very important psychological win with the black pieces against the tournament leader. So it was followed by two more wins against Olga Girya and Krasenkow!

When the final round arrived I even had a good chance of finishing in second place if I could win against Bok, but after trying very hard for seven and a half hours, when the whole tournament was over, including the tiebreak match between Carlsen and Giri, the game ended in a draw – so I only shared 3rd place, placing 4th on tiebreak. Nevertheless, overall, after my bad start I could be satisfied with my final result, especially after coming back from minus two to finish on plus two in such a strong event!

The following last round encounter was a very important clash, as both players were on plus two and a win for either side would mean a possible shared third place. So a full blooded fight was expected from both of them.

D80

Matthias Bluebaum	2640
Jeffery Xiong	2634

Round 8, B Group, Wijk aan Zee 2018

1. d4 ♔f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♔c3 d5 4. ♔g5 ♔e4 5. ♔xe4 dxe4 6. e3 c5 7. ♔e2 ♔g7 8. ♖d2 0-0 8... ♔c6 9. d5 ♔e5 10. ♔c3 f5 11. ♔e2 ♔f7 12. ♔h4 0-0 13. f3∞

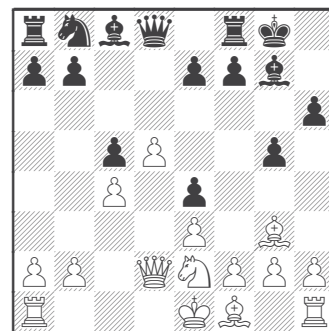


▲ Jeffery Xiong, Wijk aan Zee 2018.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

was played in a A. Morozevich 2694 – M. Carlsen 2821, Biel 2011.

9. d5 h6 Also possible is 9... ♔d7.

10. ♔h4 g5 11. ♔g3



11... e5? A new idea here, but Jeffery either underestimated the power of the

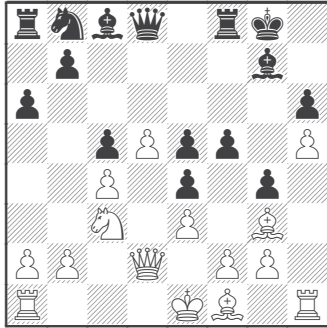
passed d-pawn or maybe thought he would be in time to blockade it – but this was not the case. Correct is 11...♙f5! 12.♘c3 ♘d7 13.♙e2 ♘e5=.

12.h4!? Also to be considered was 12.♘c3 f5 13.h4.

12...g4 12...f5 13.hxg5 hxg5 14.♘c3±.

13.♘c3 f5 14.h5!? Freeing the good h4 square for his bishop.

14...a6 14...♖d6 15.♘b5 ♖d7 16.d6±.



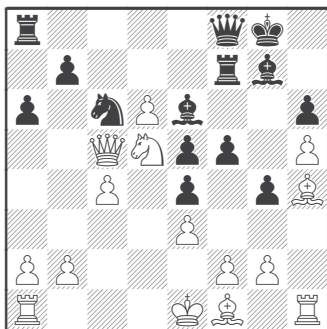
15.d6! A very important move, by which White takes control of d5 with his queen and/or knight. 15.0-0-0 could be met by 15...♖d6.

15...♘c6 Black is not in time to prevent 15.♖d5, for example 15...♙e6 16.♘d5 ♖xd6?? would allow 17.♘f6+.

16.♖d5+ ♗f7 17.♖xc5 White is a pawn up with almost no compensation for Black.

17...♙e6 18.♙h4 ♖f8 18...♙f6 19.♙xf6 ♖xf6 20.0-0-0 is winning.

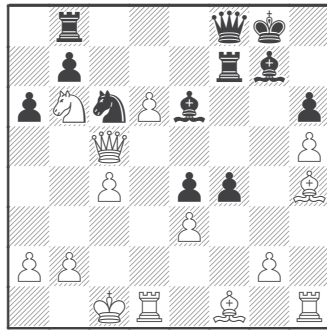
19.♘d5



19...g3!? Black is almost lost so he decides to be as tricky as possible.

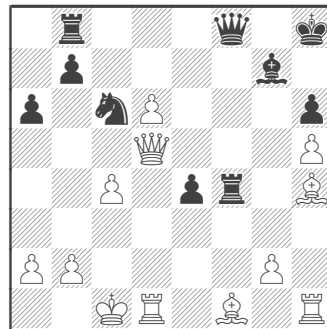
20.fxg3 ♗c8 21.♘b6 ♗b8 22.0-0-0 f4 Continuing the strategy of complicating the position and making White use up time on the clock.

23.♘d5 ♗c8 24.♘b6 ♗b8 25.gxf4 exf4



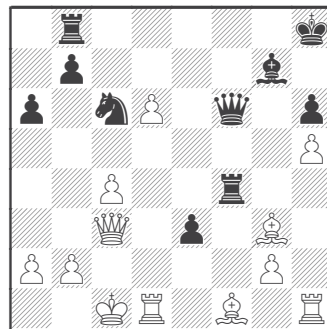
26.exf4? This gives Black a huge chance to activate his rook and queen. White should have completed his development by 26.♙e2!, when he would be winning after, say, 26...f3 27.gxf3 exf3 28.♙d3.

26...♗xf4 27.♘d5 ♙xd5 28.♖xd5+ ♘h8



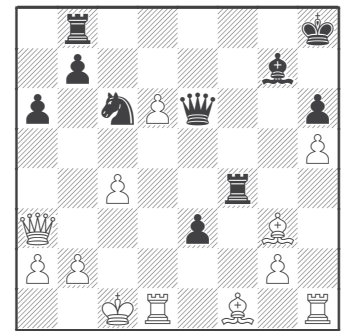
29.♙g3? A big blunder which allows Black a very strong attack. Instead 29.g4 e3 30.♙e2; 29.♖d2 e3! 30.♖c2 (30.♖xe3 ♗xh4 31.♗xh4 ♖f6) 30...b5 31.c5 ♘b4 32.♖b3 ♗c8 would have led to complicated play.

29...♖f6! 30.♖d2 e3! 31.♖c3



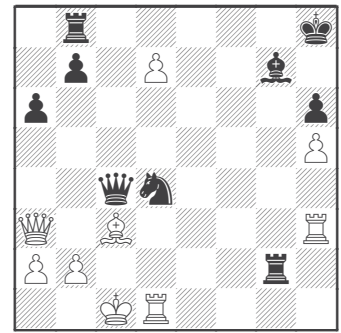
31...♖e6! Suddenly all Black's pieces have become extremely active.

32.♖a3 Or 32.♖d3 ♗g4 33.♙e1 ♘d4!±.



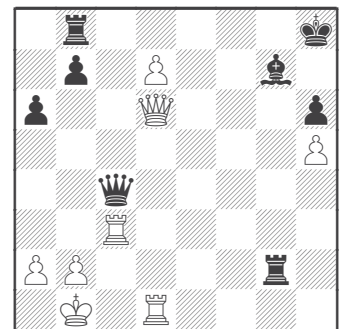
32...♗g4 Threatening both bishops!

33.♙e1 e2 34.♙xe2 ♖xe2 35.♙c3 ♖xc4 36.♗h3 ♗xg2 37.d7 ♘d4



38.♖d6?? His last chance lay in 38.♙e3!. Then Black must play precisely by 38...♙d8! whereupon White best replies 39.♖e7 ♘c6±, since 39.♙e8+? loses after 39...♘h7 40.♗xd8 ♘e2+ 41.♘b1 ♘xc3+ 42.bxc3 ♖e4+ 43.♘a1 ♖c2.

38...♘e2+ 39.♘b1 ♘xc3+ 40.♗xc3



40...♗xb2+!

White resigned

With this important win Jeffery was tied for 3rd-6th but he had the better tiebreak so actually finished in 3rd place (I was 4th). A just reward for winning his last three games with Black!



THERE ARE FOUR TYPES OF DECISIONS YOU CAN TAKE IN CHESS. THESE PAGES PROVIDE TRAINING IN ALL OF THEM.

Aagaard's ALL-ROUND TRAINING

by GM JACOB AAGAARD

01

TRAINING IN AUTOMATIC DECISION MAKING

There is only one move.

ACTION

Candidates check. Is there only one option?

TRAINING

Candidates. Practice finding additional ideas.

02

SIMPLE DECISIONS

Positions without much to calculate.

ACTION

Quick decision making. Can often be played on feeling.

TRAINING

Train using the three questions:
1. Where are the weaknesses?
2. What is the opponent's idea?
3. Which is the worst placed piece?

03

CRITICAL MOMENTS

Moments where you sense that the difference between the best and other moves is high.

ACTION

Accurate calculation. Don't rely on intuition. Work it out; no guessing.

TRAINING

Practice calculating difficult tactics.

04

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

Complex positions that cannot be conclusively worked out.

ACTION

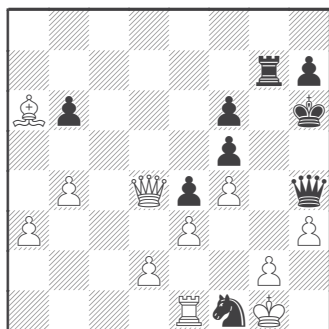
Use all your tools, from general considerations and three questions, to deep calculation.

TRAINING

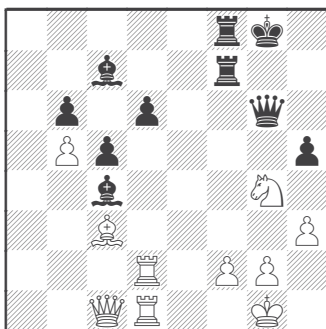
Analyse games deeply, look at the games by the best players, solve difficult strategic exercises.

01 TRAINING IN AUTOMATIC DECISION MAKING

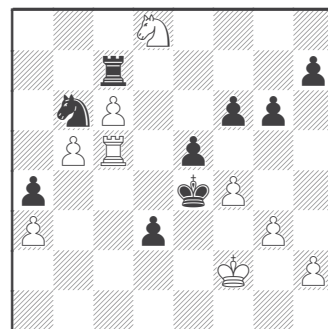
CANDIDATES 1



CANDIDATES 2

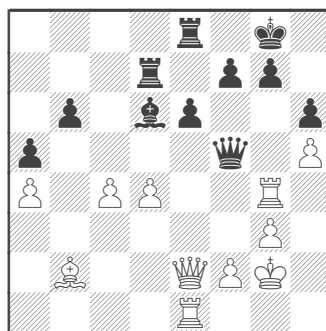


CANDIDATES 3



02 SIMPLE DECISIONS

WEAKNESSES



WORST PLACED PIECE

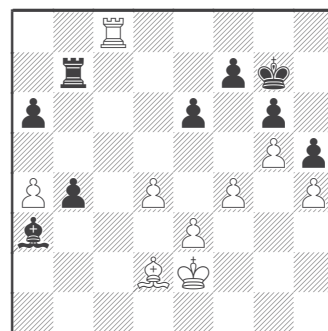
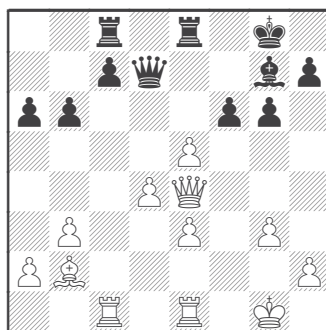


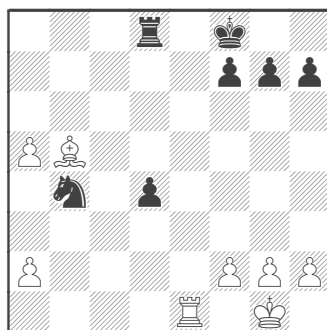
Photo by David Liada

03 CRITICAL MOMENTS

PROPHYLAXIS

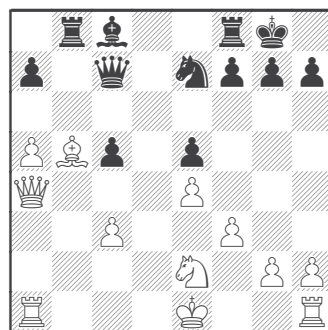


CRITICAL MOMENT



04 STRATEGIC DECISIONS

STRATEGIC DECISIONS



CANDIDATES 1

Korobov 2760 - Andreikin 2771
Huaian (blitz) 2017

With only seconds on the clock, Andreikin missed a brilliant candidate move.

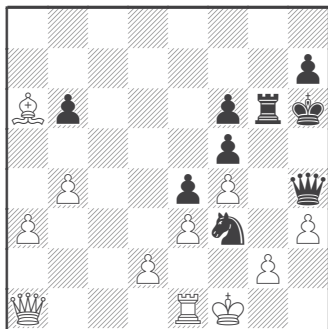
41...♖h2!! A surprising move that becomes more and more attractive the longer you look at it.

Being close to losing on time, probably the sensible choice was to play 41...♖g2+?! with perpetual check.

In the game Andreikin played 41...♖xe1? and after 42.♖xf6+ lost on time. After 42...♖g6 White has a perpetual only.

42.♖a1 The only move that prolongs the fight. The endgame is not clearly winning for Black, so setting up a mating attack is preferable.

42...♖f3+ 43.♖f1 ♖g6!



Defending against counterplay. White cannot improve his position.

44.♖c1 44.♖e2 ♖g3 leads to mate. 44.♖e2 ♖h2+ 45.♖g1 ♖xh3 and White has no defence against ...♖f3.

44...♖g3 45.♖e2 45.♖e2 ♖h2! and Black wins.

45...♖xg2+ 46.♖d1 ♖xe1 47.♖xe1 ♖g1+ 48.♖f1 ♖g2 and Black wins.

CANDIDATES 2

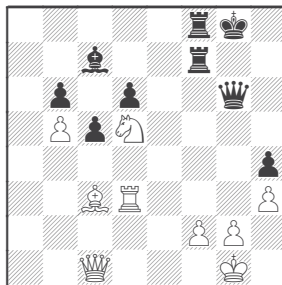
Karjakin 2757- Vidit 2676

World Rapid Championship, Riyadh 2017

It is interesting that some grandmasters I have shown this position to fail to find the brute force win Karjakin missed. The reason is the presence of another attractive looking move.

39.♖d5? White can win with the elementary 39.♖xd6! ♖xd6 40.♖xd6, when Black has no defense. 40...♖f5 41.♖h6 wins the queen and 40...♖xd6 41.♖g5+ leads to mate in a few moves.

39...♖xd5?! Black missed the best defense. 39...♖f4!, when after 40.♖e3 ♖xd5 41.♖xd5 ♖4f7 42.♖d3 h4 the position is very complicated.



White has a very strong knight on d5, which does not look worse than a rook, but on the other hand, it is not a rook.

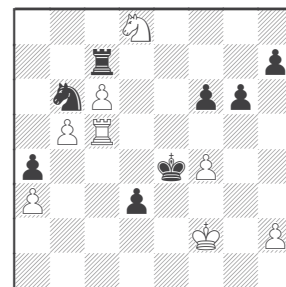
40.♖xd5 ♖f5 41.♖h6+ ♖h7 42.♖xf5 ♖xf5 43.♖d1 White is better and won the game 20 moves later.

CANDIDATES 3

Levan 2654 - Vachier-Lagrave 2839
World Rapid Championship, Riyadh 2017

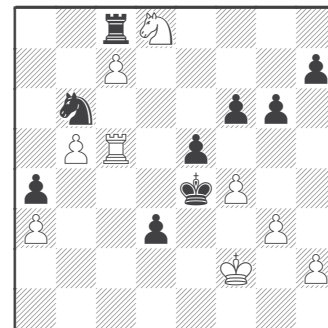
In time trouble MVL missed a chance to win the game.

42...♖c8?? 42...exf4 43.gxf4 (43.♖e6 ♖e7 44.c7 ♖xe6 45.c8♖ ♖xc8 46.♖xc8 ♖d4 and Black wins, as the white king is cut off from dealing with the d-pawn.)



43...♖e7!! Black is winning. The key idea is to play 44...d2 45.♖e2 ♖d4, winning the rook. And if not that, then Black wins a tempo to cut off the white king: 44.♖b7 (44.♖c1 d2 45.♖d1 ♖d3 and Black wins.) 44...♖d4 45.c7 ♖c8 and the d-pawn steals the show.

43.c7



...and White wins.

43...♖d7 44.♖c6 ♖d5 45.♖b7 ♖b6 46.♖d6+ 1-0



Grandmaster **Jacob Aagaard** was the 2007 British Champion, co-founder of the number one chess publishing house, *Quality Chess*, and author of many chess books, including the *Decision Making in Chess* series with Boris Gelfand.

Jacob trained with Mark Dvoretsky and now helps GMs of all levels maintain and improve their level, through coaching and his six-volume series of book, *Grandmaster Preparation*. He is the only chess author to win all four major book awards.

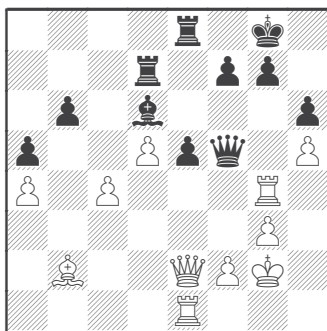
WEAKNESSES

Romanov 2626 – Riazantsev 2650
Russian Championship Superfinal 2017

We should always be aware of where the weaknesses are and look for ways to exert pressure on them.

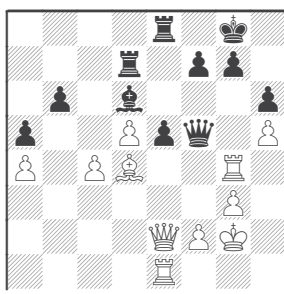
33.d5! Opening up the position for the bishop is natural and not hard to see. It is the next move that is difficult.

33...e5



34.♖e4? A natural move that my students are also drawn towards. Is White a bit better after this? Hard to tell. In the game he did not manage to create problems for Black, who set up a semi-fortress.

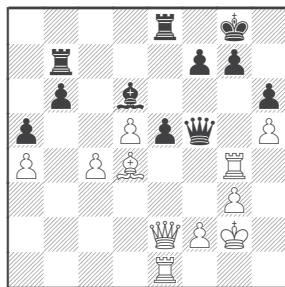
White missed the chance to put pressure on the b6-pawn which is not at all easy to defend. **34.♙d4!**



A) 34...♙c5 35.♙xc5 bxc5 36.♖f4! exf4 (36...♗g5 37.♖e4 followed by f4 wins a pawn.) 37.♗xe8+ ♔h7 38.♗e4! ♗xe4+ 39.♖xe4 The endgame is completely winning for White with ♖e8-c8/a8 coming next.

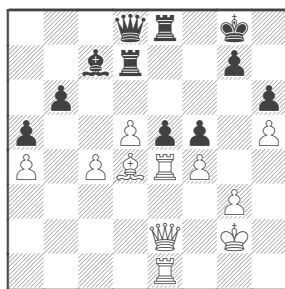
B) 34...♗f6 35.♖e4 ♖de7 36.♙xb6 ♙b4 37.c5! is essentially winning for White. There are some technical challenges to overcome, but not that many.

C) The objectively best defense is a passive move: **34...♖b7.**

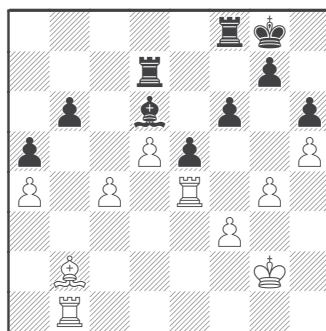


But Black remains under great pressure: **35.♖e4 f6 36.f4! ♖be7 37.fxe5 ♙xe5 38.♗d1!** The game is balancing between a white win and a draw.

D) 34...♙c7 35.♗f3 (A tempting idea is **35.♖f4 ♗g5 36.♖e4**, but Black can play **36...f5! 37.f4 ♗d8**



and **...e5-e4** on the next move. The problem is that the optically attractive **38.♖xe5?! ♙xe5 39.fxe5?** fails on account of **39...♖xd5!** and Black will play for a win in the endgame.) **35...♗xf3+ 36.♙xf3 ♖dd8 37.♙e3 ♙f8 38.♖b1 ♖b8 39.♙e4**, etc.
34...♖de7± 35.g4 ♗d7 36.♗f3 f6 37.♗f5 ♙b4 38.♗xd7 ♖xd7 39.♖c1 ♖f8 40.f3 ♙d6 41.♖b1



41...f5 42.gxf5 ♖xf5 43.♙c3 ♙c7

44.♖h1 ♖df7 45.♖h3 ♙d6 46.♙d2 ♙c5 47.♙c3 ♙d6 48.♙d2 ♙c5 49.♙c3 ½-½

WORST PLACED PIECE

Sarin 2532 – Sasikiran 2671

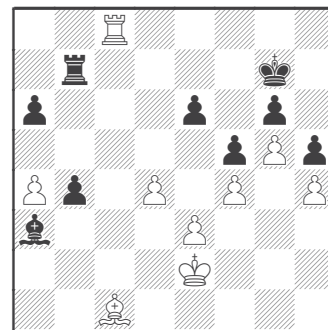
Aeroflot Open, Moscow 2018

Also in the endgame, we should always be aware of making something out of all of the pieces. In this position the black king is failing to play a role. Sasikiran, a gifted technician, tried to win the game without the king and failed.

55...f5! The correct first move, but the follow up was not optimal.

55...b3?! 56.♙c3! gives White a lot of counterplay. There are a number of variations worth investigating deeply, before we can consider the position fully understood, but the general trend is towards **56...f6 57.gxf6+ ♙f7 58.♖h8 ♖b6 59.♖h7+ ♙g8 60.♖g7+ ♙f8 61.♖xg6 b2 62.♙xb2 ♖xb2+ 63.♙f3 ♖b3 64.f7 ♙xf7 65.f5 exf5 66.♖xa6** and although White is still on the back foot, he is awfully close to a drawn ending.

56.♙c1!



White has to fight against the advance of the b-pawn.

56...♙xc1?? 56...♙f7! 57.♖h8 This is the only try. But Black is winning after **57...♖b6!**, a move which it can be difficult to consider, but necessary to win the game. White cannot prevent the black king from coming into the game, winning.

57.♖xc1 b3 58.♙d3 a5 ½-½

PROPHYLAXIS

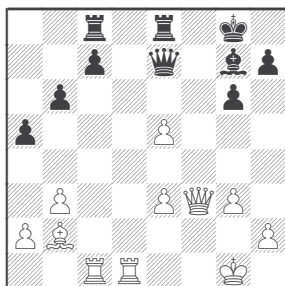
**Alonso Rosell 2509 -
Garcia Martin 2316**
Sitges 2017

Black has sacrificed a pawn with the intention of winning it back and defending solidly. In the game his plan worked beautifully, so let's look at this first. White has to act quickly to avoid this.

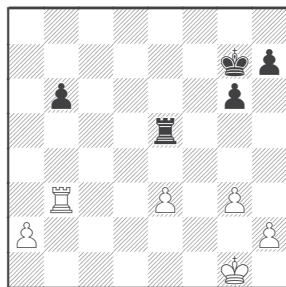
23.♖c6! This powerful move forces things. Black cannot allow White to play e5-e6.

23.♖c6? was played in the game, which continued 23...♗xc6 24.♞xc6 fxe5 25.d5 ♕f8!± Black has a passive position, but White has no pawn breaks of significance. After 26.e4 ♕d6 27.♙c1 a5 28.♙e3 ♖b8 29.♞ec1 ♞e7 30.♙g2 ♙f8 31.♞f1+ White decided that his winning chances were all but gone and offered a draw.

23.♞ed1!? with the intention of remaining a pawn up with 23...fxe5 24.dxe5 ♞e7 25.♖c4+ is an alternative try and not one I would have been unhappy coming up with during the game. But things are a lot more complicated after 23...a5!?, when the a-pawn will no longer be hanging. It is not easy to prove an advantage for White here, but analysis shows a clear path: 24.♞f3! Getting out of the pin. 24...fxe5 25.dxe5 ♞e7



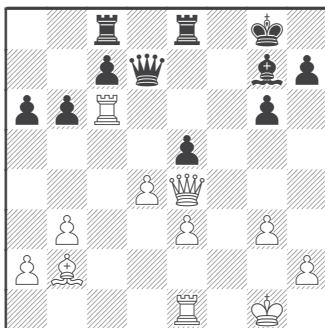
26.♞c4!! Establishing a counter pin. A rook endgame results by force: 26...♙xe5 27.♞d5+ ♞e6 28.♙xe5! ♞xd5 29.♞xd5 c6 30.♞d6 ♞xe5 31.♞xc6 ♞xc6 32.♞xc6 a4! (32...♞xe3 is probably lost directly after 33.♙f2! and Black will not get the activity he needs to make a draw.) 33.♞c3 axb3 34.♞xb3 ♙g7



Will White win this endgame with best play? It took a lot of nice moves to reach this position and still the win is not obvious. For example, the endgame without the queenside pawns is a draw.

23.d5 f5! 24.♖c4 b5 25.♖c6 ♞xc6 26.♞cd8! and Black has enough counterplay against the collapsing white centre.

23...fxe5 23...♞e6 24.♞ec1 does not improve Black's chances.



24.dxe5! 24.d5 ♕f8! is similar to the game. **24...♙xe5** 25.♙xe5 ♞xe5 **26.♞xg6+!** **hgx6** 27.♞xe5 White has an extra pawn and better chances in an endgame with queens than in a rook endgame. Black's weakened king's position will be a liability.

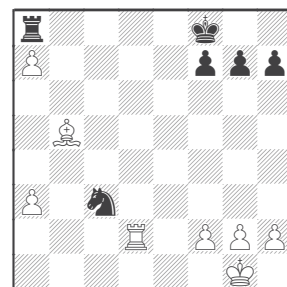
CRITICAL MOMENT

Riazantsev 2650 - Malakhov 2686
Russian Championship Superfinal 2017

This endgame contains a lot of critical moments. The winning variation starts with a few forcing moves that are fairly obvious, but then the line ends in what I call Resistance (capital R). Like water that

always flows the easiest way, we have a tendency to deviate when faced with resistance. But the best way to deal with calculation is always to slow down and look for options at such moments (and all others). As we shall see, this will solve this problem rather speedily. But with lack of calculation technique, things are not so easy.

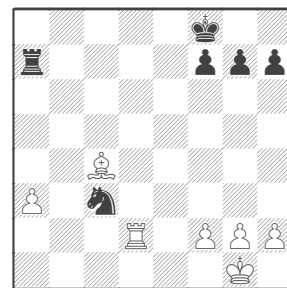
30.a3! 30.a6? d3! The d-pawn provides Black with hope and counterplay. 31.a3 d2 32.♙d1 ♙a2 33.a7 ♙c3 34.♞xd2 ♞a8!



The endgame is no longer obviously winning for White.

A) 35.♙c6 ♞xa7 36.♞d8+ ♙e7 37.♞a8 ♞xa8 38.♙xa8 looks appealing, but the endgame is a draw by force: 38...♙d6 39.f3 ♙c5 40.♙f2 ♙b5 41.a4 (41.♙e4 ♙xa3 42.♙xh7 is possible, but Black will hold. There are too few pawns left.) 41...♙c3 42.a5 ♙b5 43.♙e3 ♙xa5 44.♙d4 ♙b4 45.♙d5 The last try. 45...♙xd5! Not the only move, but the most accurate. 46.♙xd5 ♙c3 47.♙d6 ♙d2 48.♙e7 f5 49.♙f7 ♙e3 50.♙xg7 ♙f2 51.g4 f4! 52.♙xh7 ♙xf3 53.g5 ♙g2 54.g6 f3 55.g7 f2 56.g8♞+ ♙xh2 and the game ends in a draw.

B) 35.♙c4! ♞xa7



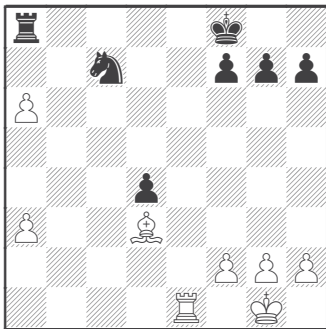
B1) 36.g3?! A small blunder, presumably in time trouble. 36...♙b1! 37.♞d8+ ♙e7 38.♞g8 ♙xa3 39.♙d3 g6 40.♞b8 ♞c7 41.♞b3 ♙c2 42.♙xc2 ♞xc2.

B2) The last chance to fight for an advantage was 36.♖b2, but Black will hold with accurate defense. 36...f5 37.♖b3 White has real winning chances, but with a strong defense from Black, the game will stay in the grey zone for a very long time. A plausible way for White to hold could be: 37...♗e4 38.♕d3?! ♗c5 39.♖b8+ ♔e7 40.♕xf5 g6 41.♕b1 ♖xa3 42.g3 ♖b3! And Black will draw this endgame with best play.

30...♗d5 The only move. 30...♗c2 is refuted with a nice shot: 31.♖e8+! and it is all over. 31...♖xe8 32.♕xe8 d3 (32...♗xe8 33.a6 and the pawn runs to promotion.) 33.♕a4 ♗xa3 34.a6 ♗c4 35.a7 ♗b6 36.♕c6 and White wins.

31.a6 ♗c7 31...d3 32.♕xd3 ♗c7 33.♕f1 ♖a8 34.♖c1! is two pawns better than the main line.

32.♕d3 ♖a8 This is the moment of resistance. If we stop and treat this as a candidate move exercise, it is not too difficult to solve.



33.♖c1!! Without this move the win is not so obvious.

33...♗xa6 Not taking the pawn is hopeless too: 33...♗e6 34.♖c6 and technique takes over. This is not why Riazantsev would reject this line. White's advances have been considerable.

34.♖c6! The knight is trapped.

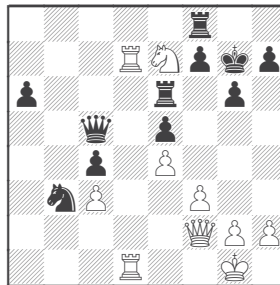
34...♗b8 35.♖c8+ ♔e7 36.♕e4 White wins.

Volkov 2645 – Sammalvuo 2416

Rilton Cup, Stockholm 2017

The solution is based on White not being able to castle.

18...c4!! A temporary pawn sacrifice. 18...a6!? is a natural move that equalises without problems. 19.♕c4 ♕d7 20.♖a2 ♕b5 21.0-0 ♕xc4 22.♖xc4 ♖b5 23.♖fd1 ♗c6 24.♖d5 ♗xa5 Black has won a pawn, but he does not have an advantage. White has too much counterplay. 25.♖a2 ♗b3 26.♖ad1 ♖b6 27.♗g3 c4 28.♗f5 ♖e6 29.♖f2 g6 30.♖d7 ♖c5 31.♗e7+ ♔g7

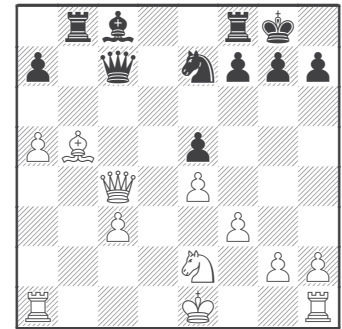


32.♖a7?? A crude blunder in an otherwise fine position. (32.♖xc5 ♗xc5 33.♖c7 and 34.♗d5 and White is by no means worse.) 32...♗d4! Ouch! 33.♖b7 ♗e2+ 34.♔f1 ♖xf2+ 35.♔xf2 ♗xc3 36.♖c1 (36.♖dd7 ♗b5 37.♔e1 c3 38.♔d1 ♖d6+ will also blunt the majority of the white counterplay.) 36...♖b5 37.♗d5 (37.♖xc4 ♗d6) 37...♖c8 38.♔e3 ♖c5 39.g4 h6 40.h4 ♗d4 41.♖c3 ♖ec6 42.h5?! (42.♖e7 ♗e6) 42...♖b5! 43.♖d7 ♖b2 44.♗f4 exf4+ 45.♔xd4 ♖d2+.

19.♖xc4 White has to fight for the c5-square.

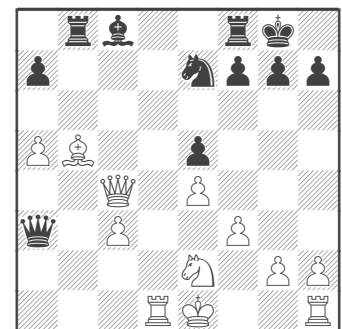
19.♕xc4 is met strongly with 19...♖c5!. Black does not want a bishop on d7, while White's queen would be better placed on a2. So instead of winning a pointless tempo, Black prevents White from castling. 20.♖a2 ♗h8 21.♖d1 f5.

Also 19.♖d1 ♖c5 20.♕xc4 ♗h8 21.♖a2 f5 gives Black a strong initiative. White is a long way from castling.



19...♖d6!! A brilliant triangulation move. The key idea is to meet 20.♖d3 with 20...♖c5! and 20.0-0 with 20...♕e6 and 21...♖c5+. But it was not necessary to see this move in order to decide on sacrificing the pawn. After 19...♖b7 20.♕a4 ♕e6 21.♖c5 ♖fc8 22.♖e3 ♕c4 Black also has excellent compensation, enough to call it an advantage.

20.♖d1 ♖a3



Try finding a move for White. It is not at all easy.

21.♖a4 Or 21.♖d3 ♖c5 22.♕c4 ♖b7 23.♕d5 ♖b2 24.♕c4 ♗h8 and White's position is truly horrible.

21...♖c5 22.♕c4 ♗h8 23.♖a2 f5 Black has a serious initiative and White no obvious way to complete his development.

On a Rock Across the Pond

by **GM MACKENZIE MOLNER** |||

Bearing in mind his victory last year in the World Cup, Armenia's chess hero Levon Aronian has run up quite a nice list of accomplishments in recent months. But since he wasn't the only grandmaster playing exciting and strong chess on the Rock, we will also take a look at games played by the co-champions Nakamura and Rapport as well.

B76

Hikaru Nakamura 2781

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4
♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♚e3 ♚g7 7.f3 0-0

10...e5 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.exd5
 ♜xd5 13.♙c4 ♙e6 14.♚b1!? This
 is definitely not the normal move order
 from White, who typically prefers
 14.♜e4 in this position, but I like the
 benefits of 14.♚b1. Black will be slower
 to unpin the queen compared to the main
 line, which allows White to limit some
 of Black's attempts at counterplay. For
 example 14.♜e4 ♚c7 immediately
 unpinning. 15.♙c5 ♜fd8 16.♚b1 Now
 Black can choose from several ideas,
 including 16...f5 or 16...♜f4!?

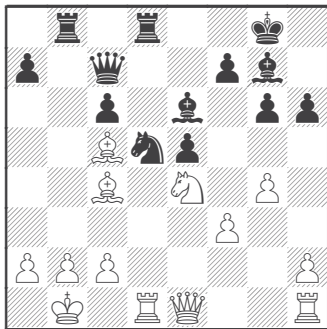


Hikaru Nakamura. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

14...♖b8 15.♘e4 Also possible is 15.♙b3.

15...♙c7 15...f5!? Now both 16.♘g5 and 16.♙xa7 have led to promising results for White. For example, 16.♘g5 ♙c8 (The bold move 16...e4!? should be analyzed closely with the computer but my feeling is that White is doing fairly well, despite Black's aggressive intentions.) 17.h4 h6 18.♘e4 leads to a complex position but one which is somewhat favorable for White.

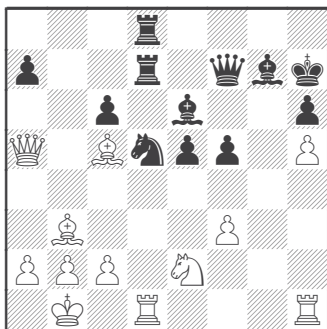
16.♙c5 ♖fd8 17.g4! h6 If White can restrict Black's ...f7-f5 advance he will be doing very well here because that's Black's best source of counterplay. Unfortunately, h2-h4 is not helpful in this regard.



18.h4?! 18.♖g1!? comes to mind to prevent f4-f5. Then 18...f5? 19.gxf5 gxf5?? loses to 20.♘f6+!. Also there is 18.♙a3!? which may look really artificial, but the idea is to clear the c5-square for the white knight, e.g. 18...f5? (18...a5 19.h4) 19.♘c5!±.

18...f5 19.gxf5 gxf5 20.♘g3 ♙f7 20...♙h7 would also have been a good alternative.

21.♙b3 ♖d7 22.♘e2 ♖bd8 23.h5 ♙h7 24.♙a5 Better is 24.♙f2!.



24...♘f4 24...♘c7! is a more appropriate idea, planning to trade light-squared

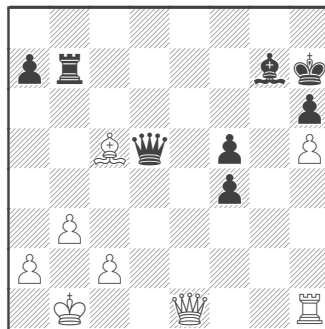
bishops and then plant the knight on e6, where it will be perfectly placed. Black will then have full counterplay after 25.♖xd7 (25.♖dg1 ♙xb3 26.axb3 ♘e6 is also fine for Black.) 25...♖xd7 26.♙xa7 ♙xb3 27.axb3 ♘b5 28.♙b6 e4 with chances for both sides.

25.♖xd7± ♖xd7 26.♘xf4 exf4 27.♙e1 27.♙f2!.

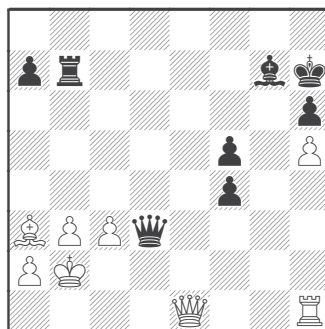
27...♙d5 28.♙b4? White would still be doing well here after 28.♙h4! due to Black's pawn weaknesses.

28...c5! 29.♙xd5? White would still be okay if he didn't play this move, which allows Black incredible piece activity.

29...♙xd5 30.♙a3 ♙xf3! 31.♙xc5 ♖b7 32.b3 ♙d5



33.♙a3? This is still an unattractive position for White but Duda would be better off playing 33.♙f2!±. White needs to contest the long diagonal as strongly as possible, and maintaining protection of d4 would make things more difficult for Black. Play might then continue 33...♖e7! 34.♙xe7 ♙xh1+ 35.♙e1 (35.♙e1?! ♙xe1+ 36.♙xe1 ♙d4 with the idea of ...f3-f2, winning.) 35...♙e4!. 33...♙d4 34.c3 ♙d3+ 35.♙b2



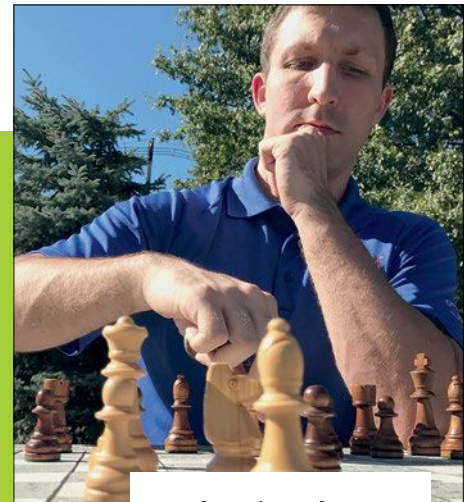
35...f3?! It's hard to criticize this move because it is still winning, but there was an easier way: 35...a5!. This preventive move is extremely strong. Black

eliminates White's defensive resource ♙b4, and makes ...♖c7 impossible to handle. Then after 36.♖h2 ♖c7 37.♖c2 f3! the f-pawn will be used as a final deflection to lure defenses from c3! A beautiful finish.

36.♙c5? f2! 37.♙xf2 ♖e7! 38.♙xe7 ♙xc3+ 39.♙a3 ♙a5 mate.

Nakamura's games tend to reinforce the famous saying that fortune favors the brave. To me, this game is no different. He takes risks with the opening he chooses, and fights from a worse yet complicated position and finds a way to win. Another nice performance from Naka, who would go on to tie for first.

Richard Rapport has a habit of playing eccentric and wild openings but in this game he demonstrates impeccable technique. A fine victory,



Mackenzie Molner is an American grandmaster, residing in New Jersey. He has been US Open Co-Champion and competed in the U.S. Championship. Mac is now a full-time chess coach, teaching school programs, group classes, and private lessons.

which also put him on the way to a tie for first place.

D78

Richard Rapport	2700
David Howell	2682

Round 8, Gibraltar Masters 2018

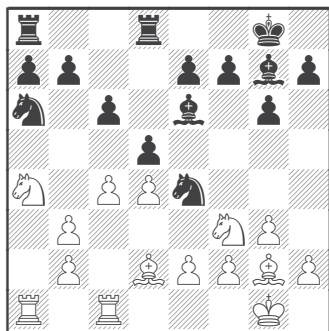
1.d4 Due to the nature of this game being more strategic rather than tactical, I have kept my analysis of variations brief but tried to capture the important positional ideas in my commentary.

1...d6 2.c4 g6 3.d3 g7 4.g3 c6 5.dxc3 d5 6.b3 0-0 7.g2 b6 8.0-0 d8 According to the database this position has been reached hundreds of times but Rapport selects a relatively untested move.

9.d2 9.d1 is the most commonly played move here.

9...e6 10.a4! bxb3 11.axb3 a6 Compared to what happens in the game, **11...bd7!** would be a more reliable way to defend the c5 square.

12.fxc1 d4



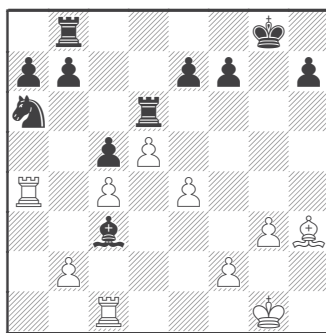
13.a5! dxc8 The drawback of 13...b6 is that it weakens the c6-square and knight on a6, although it may still be playable. Then **14.e1 c5!?**.

14.e3 g5?! I think Black begins to go wrong with this plan.

15.d2! dxd2 16.xd2 g4 17.f1 dxc4 18.bxc4 c5 19.g2! ab8 20.d5 d7 21.c3 xa4 22.xa4 White has almost a winning positional advantage here and Rapport's exploitation of this advantage is absolutely textbook. A fine display of technique!

22...d8 23.h3 Softening up the kingside and fracturing Black's pawns.

23...gxh3 24.xh3 d6 25.e4 xc3



26.xc3 The computer suggests the unnatural move 26.bxc3, and it makes sense as well. The b-file is opened and White permanently denies the black knight access to the b4 square.

26...b6 27.b3 e5 28.f3 White begins his winning plan of f3-f5 followed up by f2-f4, creating a deadly central pawn mass.

28...g7 29.a5 h6 At this point White needs to prevent counterplay against the b3-pawn and Rapport handles this nicely.

30.d7 d6 31.b5 dxc7 32.a4 32.xa7 would also work well but it makes sense not to change the status quo

GIBRALTAR MASTERS

275 players, 10 rounds
22nd Jan - 1st Feb 2018

1-7. Hikaru NAKAMURA,
Richard RAPPORT,
Maxime VACHIER-LAGRAVE,
Levon ARONIAN, Nikita VITIUGOV,
Michael ADAMS,
Le QUANG LIEM **7½**,
8-25. David HOWELL,
Abhijeet GUPTA, Das DEBASHIS,
Jan-Krzysztof DUDA, Grigoriy OPARIN,
Wang HAO, Daniele VOCATURO,
Boris GELFAND, S.P. SETHURAMAN,
Emil SUTOVSKY, Daniil DUBOV,
Lance HENDERSON DE LA FUENTE,
Ori KOBO, Ivan CHEPARINOV,
Alexander MOTYLEV,
S. L. NARAYANAN, Vladimir EPISHIN
and Falko BINDRICH **7**, etc.

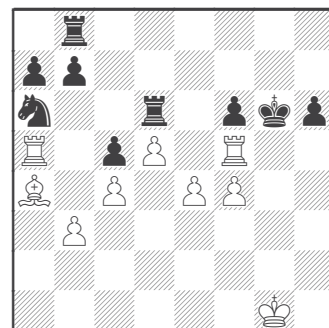
Semi-Final

Maxime VACHIER-LAGRAVE —
Hikaru NAKAMURA **2½-1½**
Levon ARONIAN — Richard RAPPORT
2-0

Final

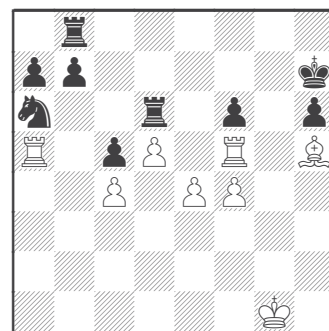
Levon ARONIAN —
Maxime VACHIER-LAGRAVE **2½-1½**

since White is positionally winning here.
32...a6 33.f5 f6 34.f4 exf4 35.gxf4 g6



36.b4!! dxb4 36...cxb4 creates a little more counterplay for Black but White's center would still roll on after 37.c5!+-.

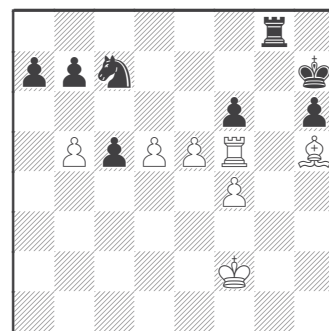
37.d1 a6 38.h5+ g7



39.e5! The final step in White's plan. A picturesque position, showing the domination imposed by White's center pawns. There is absolutely no defense.

39...b6 40.b5 40.e6! would have ended matters immediately. For example, **40...g8+ 41.f2 dxc7 42.xf6**.

40...g8+ 41.f2 bxb5 42.cxb5 dxc7



43.d6 dxb5 44.xf6 d8 45.f7+ g8 46.b7 a6 47.b6 c4 48.xa6 c3 49.c6 1-0 Well played by Richard Rapport!

Levon Aronian.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.



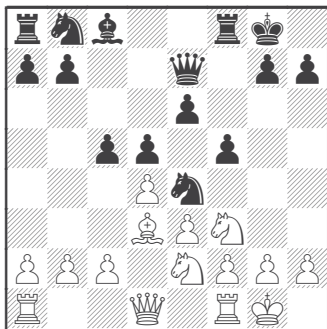
This is the first game of two that feature the eventual champion, Levon Aronian. In this game Levon faces an offbeat opening and stubborn resistance throughout the middlegame, but brings the point home with active and imaginative play.

A80

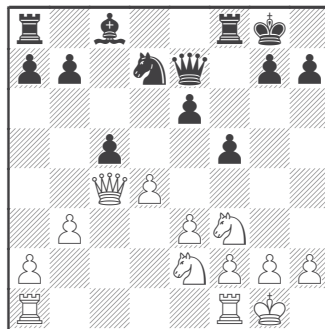
Levon Aronian	2797
Sarah Hoelt	2400

Round 3, Gibraltar Masters 2018

1.d4 f5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♙g5 d5 3...e6 is an alternative for Black but it doesn't have the best reputation. White can continue **4.e4 fxe4 5.♗xe4 ♙e7 6.♙xf6±. 4.e3 e6 5.♗f3 ♙e7 6.♙d3 ♗e4** Black can also hold off playing this and just castle here.
7.♙xe7 ♖xe7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♗e2 A standard plan in this line.
9...c5

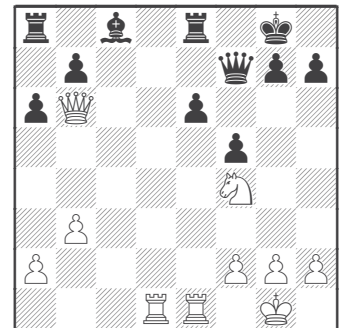


10.b3!? More players have preferred to play **10.c4** although it doesn't seem to give White better chances than the game move after **10...dxc4 11.♙xe4!?** **fxe4 12.♗e5 b6∞.**
10...♗d7 I would prefer **10...b6.** Black's dark squares are a little weak but his position still remains perfectly playable.
11.c4!± dxc4 12.♙xc4 ♗d6 13.♖c2 13.♗f4 is a tempting alternative. Following **13...♗xc4 14.bxc4 e5 15.♗d5 ♖d6** Black is okay.
13...♗xc4 14.♖xc4

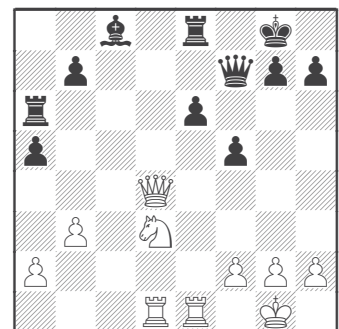


14...♗e8? 14...b6! =.
15.♗f4 Stronger is **15.dxc5! ♗xc5 (15...♖xc5 16.♖xc5 ♗xc5 17.♗fc1±) 16.♗ed4!±**, gaining a tempo against **f5** and planning to follow up with some combination of **♗fd1, b3-b4**, and **♖ac1**, exerting annoying positional pressure.
15...cxd4 16.exd4 ♖d6 17.♗e5! ♗xe5 18.dxe5 ♖xe5 19.♗fe1 White has sacrificed a pawn, and in return has gained long-term positional compensation.
19...♖f6 20.♖ad1 Stronger is **20.♖b5! ♗d8 21.♖ad1!** preventing **...♗d7.**
20...♖f7 21.♖b5 a6?! 21...b6!∞ Black's idea would then be **...♗b8** and then **...♗b7** with a playable position.
22.♖b6 After this move, Black's position is still not in bad shape but from a practical point of view it is much easier

to play White's position.

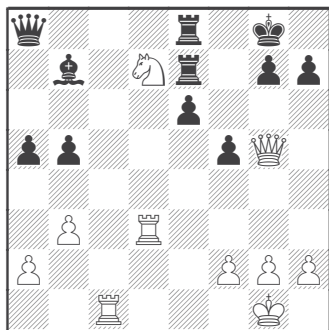


22...a5! 23.♗d3 Better is **23.♖b5! ♖a6 24.♗d3.**
23...♖a6 24.♖d4 White could have played **24.♖b5!** transposing to the previous line.

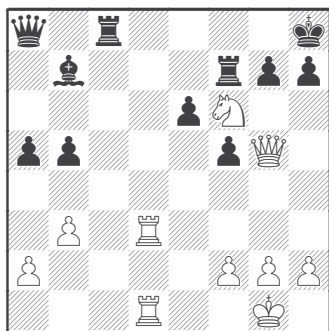


24...b5! The fact that Black can play this move is the key difference between having the white queen on d4 or b5. In this case, it is easier for Black to unravel once the bishop is liberated.

25.♖c5 ♜b7 26.♘e5 ♜b6 27.♖c1! ♜a7 28.♜g5 ♜ae7 29.♞d3 ♖c7 30.♖e3! ♜b7 31.♞c1 ♜b8 32.♘d7 ♜a8 33.♜g5! Up to here, Black has battled in a very determined fashion and been able to maintain the balance from a relatively undesirable position, but at this point he makes a decisive mistake.



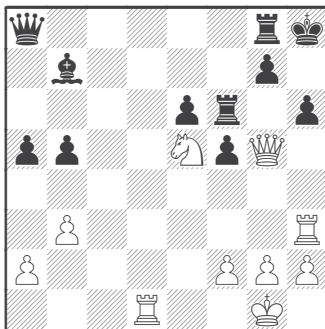
33...♔h8?? 33...h6! 34.♘f6+ ♔f7! 35.♜h4 gxf6?? (35...♞d8! or 35...♞c8 36.♞g3 ♜b8 would maintain the chaos in a way that both sides can handle. It's no surprise that an idea such as leaving White's knight entrenched on the f6-square would be difficult to find, but White has no way to make use of it and cannot break through without a mistake from Black.) 36.♜h5+ ♔f8 37.♜xh6+ ♔f7 38.♜h5+ ♔f8 39.♞g3! and Black can provide no shelter for his king. 34.♘f6 ♞c8 35.♞cd1 ♞f7



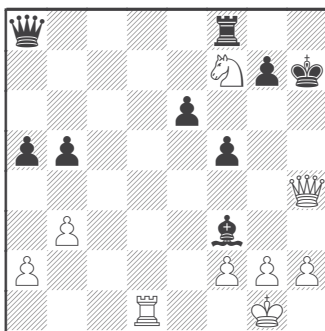
36.♘d7 36.♘h7! was a cleaner path to victory. Then after **36...♔xh7 37.♞d7 ♞cf8 38.♞xf7 ♞xf7 39.♞d8 ♜xd8 40.♜xd8 a4 41.bxa4 bxa4 42.♜h4+** White will pick up the a4-pawn. In these types of positions the attacking side has to be careful not to allow fortress type

defenses, but I think with proper play White should collect the full point here.

36...♞g8?? 37.♞h3 37.♘e5! also wins. **37...h6 38.♘e5 ♞f6**



39.♞xh6+! ♞xh6 40.♘f7+ ♔h7 41.♘h6 ♞f3 42.♘f7! ♞f8 43.♜h4+ and Black's king will soon be bombarded once the white rook joins the party on the seventh rank.



Black resigned.

If **43...♔g6 44.♘e5** mate. But **43...♔g8 44.♜h8+ ♔xf7 45.♞d7+ ♔e8 46.♜xg7** is what Black was afraid of.

All I have to do is look at the names on the scoresheet to realize that the following game will be interesting. Both Aronian and Nigel Short are known for their slightly unusual but uncompromising way of playing chess. Two styles that have brought both of these players many fine chess titles!

A27

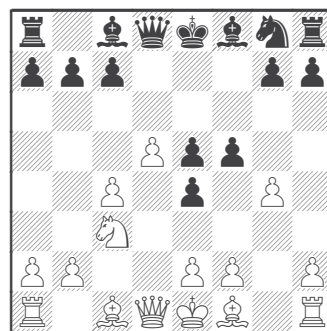
Levon Aronian	2797
Nigel Short	2681

Round 7, Gibraltar Masters 2018

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 d6 3.♘f3 f5 4.g3 ♘c6 5.d4 e4 6.d5! ♘e5 7.♘xe5 The

position after **7.♘d4!?** **♘f6 8.f4** seems more promising for White, although very different from what was played in the game.

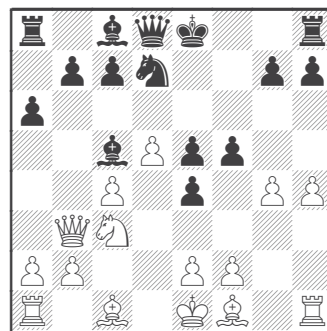
7...dxe5 8.g4!? Already, after just a handful of moves, we get to see a fresh and interesting position. Even another pawn move, **8.f4**, is worth considering!



8...♞c5 9.♜b3 With the threat of **♜b5+** picking up the bishop.

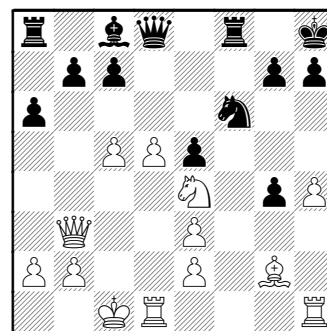
9...♘f6 10.♜b5+ ♘d7 11.h4! Following **11.gxf5?! ♜h4 12.♘d1 0-0** Black's counterplay is rather unpleasant for White.

11...a6 12.♜b3

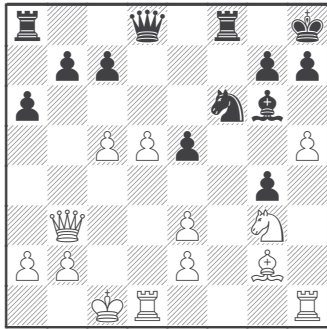


12...e3! This creates the most problems for White. **12...♘f6** is met simply by **13.gxf5±**.

13.♞xe3 ♞xe3 14.fxe3 fxe4 15.♘e4! ♘f6 16.♞g2 0-0 17.c5 ♘h8 18.0-0-0

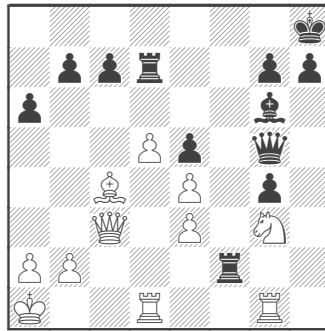


18...♙f5? On 18...♙e7!? White has the natural move 19.d6 which however does allow Black counterplay once the c-file opens, e.g. 19...cxd6 20.cxd6 ♖e8⇐. But 19.♙c3 is a logical alternative, although after 19...♙xe4 20.♙xe4 ♙f5 Black should be okay.
19.♙g3! ♙g6 20.h5!



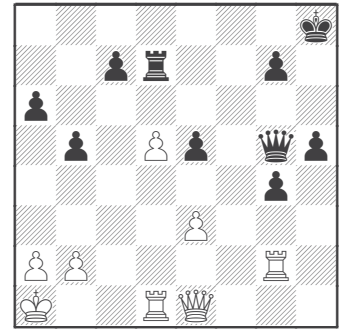
20...♙xh5!? Black has several options after 20...♙f7 21.h6! but to illustrate White's advantage I have selected a standard type of reaction to this advance: 21...g6 22.♙xb7± ♖b8 23.♙xa6 ♖a8 24.♙c4 when Black can only dream of compensation on the queenside. It's not clear whose king is

worse, and that's not a good situation when you've invested two pawns for an attack.
21.♙xh5 From now on Levon never takes his foot off of the gas for a moment. He converts his advantage ruthlessly.
21...♙f2 22.♙f1 22...♙h2 was a good alternative.
22...♙f8 23.♙g3 ♙xc5+ 24.♙c3! ♙e7 25.e4 ♙g5+ 26.♙b1 ♙f4 27.♙a1! Preventing both tricks and counterplay!
27...♙f8 28.♙g1 ♙f7 29.e3 ♙g5 30.♙c4 ♙d7



31.♙b4 31.♙f5 ♙xf5 32.♙df1!! is a very fancy way to exploit Black's vulnerable back rank and at the same time force

simplification. Then after 32...♙xf1+ 33.♙xf1 White wins back the piece while containing Black's counterplay.
31...b5 32.♙f5 h5 33.♙e1 ♙f3 Black's rook is awkwardly tangled up and can't escape its problems.
34.♙e2 ♙h3 35.♙f1 ♙xf5 36.♙xh3 ♙xe4 37.♙g2 ♙xg2 38.♙xg2



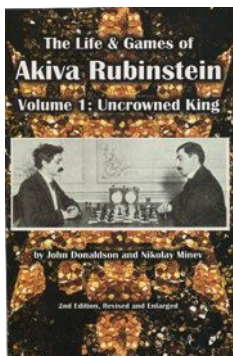
38...h4? This brings a rapid end to the game, although the result was not in doubt.
39.♙b4

Black resigned

A very creative win, typical of Aronian's unique style. A win against a past Gibraltar champion as well!

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THE 14TH WORLD CHAMPION GETS THE WILD CARD FOR THE CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT

Is Kramnik Still “The Iceberg”?

AT THE AGE OF 43, VLADIMIR KRAMNIK WILL BE BY FAR THE OLDEST PARTICIPANT OF THE UPCOMING CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT. BUT DON'T EXCLUDE HIM FROM THE FAVORITES YET! LET'S LOOK CLOSER INTO HIS RECENT PLAY.

by **GM IVAN SOKOLOV**

No doubt everyone has noticed Kramnik's now famous loss against James Tarjan at the Manx Masters. It's funny how one blunder can overshadow one's whole impression of a player's performance. But did you notice that he won four games in a row at the end? I guess after that game “Big Vlad” simply decided that enough was enough!

As I mentioned in ACM 05, the first round pairing was random and Kramnik had to play Caruana. In a tense and unclear position Kramnik made what was most likely the decisive mistake on move 20, after which Caruana skillfully regrouped his pieces and soon we had the first high profile casualty!

D36

Fabiano Caruana	2799
Vladimir Kramnik	2803

chess.com Masters, Isle of Man 2017

1.c4 e6 2.♖c3 d5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♙g5 c6 6.♙c2 h6 6...♙e7 7.e3 0-0 8.♙d3 ♖bd7 9.♖ge2 (or 9.♖f3) 9...♙e8 is considered the main line by many opening manuals.

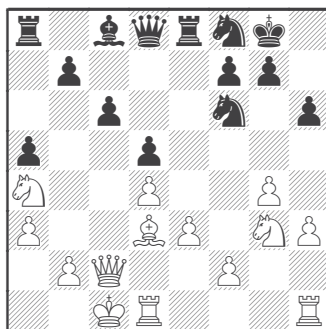
7.♙h4 ♙e7 8.e3 0-0 9.♙d3 ♙e8 10.♖ge2 Here we see why Kramnik included 6...h6 7.♙h4 – as now the black pawn on h7 is not hanging, so he can play...

10...♖h5 11.♙xe7 ♙xe7 Now Caruana comes up with an interesting idea – he will make useful moves, on both sides of the board, while leaving his king “undecided” in the center and ready to castle on either side.

12.h3!? a5 13.a3 ♖d7 14.♖a4 ♙h4!? Kramnik is eager to determine on which side the white monarch will seek its refuge. 14...♖hf6 was also an option.

15.g3 ♙d8 16.g4 Now is clear that the white king's destination is likely to be the queenside.

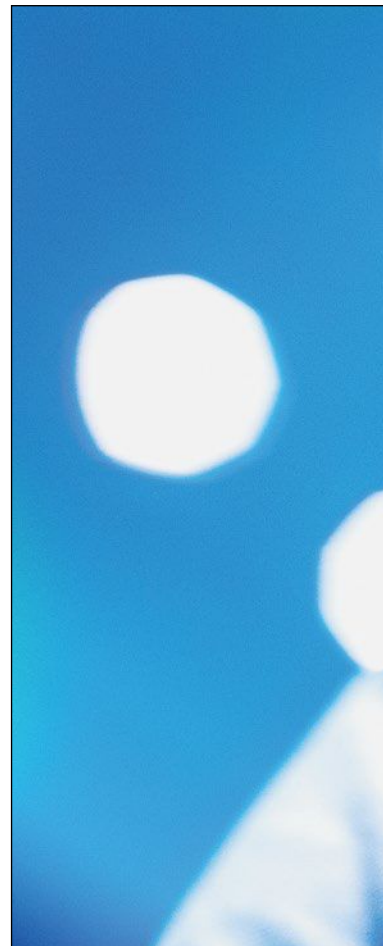
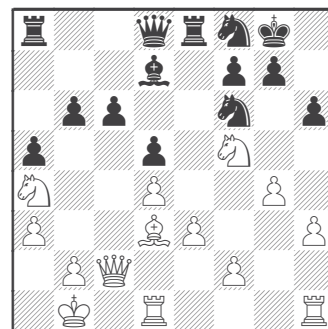
16...♖hf6 17.♖g3 ♖f8 18.0-0-0



18...b6! Black is preparing counterplay The critical moment of the game! Now

with the ...c6-c5 pawn push. 18...♖e6 19.♖b1 b5 20.♖c5 ♖xc5 21.♙xc5 ♙d7 is something my computer engine wants to convince me is 0.00, but to me this position definitely looks better for White, as Black's queenside counterplay has been contained, while White has kept his options open on the kingside.

19.♖b1 ♙d7 20.♖f5





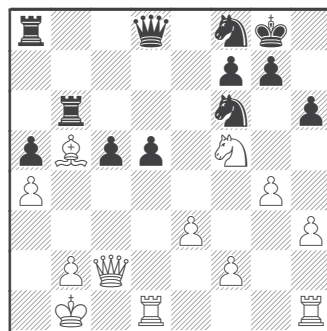
Vladimir Kramnik. Photo by Lennart Ootes

Kramnik, eager to get his queenside counterplay going as soon as possible, in a higher sense makes the decisive mistake – because I think he missed the excellent regrouping carried out by Caruana on moves 23–25.

20...c5 20...♖b8!, followed by ...c6–c5, or ...♗e6 and then ...c6–c5, would have been a much better way to implement Kramnik's idea. Black generates a queenside initiative, whereas White cannot keep Black busy on the other side of the board since, after 21.h4 ♗xg4 22.♖hg1 ♗xf5 23.♗xf5 ♗f6, 24.♗xc6?? is a terrible blunder because the white queen gets trapped by 24...b5 25.♗c5 (or 25.♗c3 ♖b6 26.♗c5 ♗e6 27.♗xe6 ♖xe6 with 28...♖ec6 to follow) 25...♖b6.

21.dxc5 ♗xa4 22.♗xa4 bxc5 Now Caruana carries out an excellent regrouping of his forces, thereby killing off Kramnik's

hopes for any queenside counterplay. **23.♗b5! ♖e6 24.♗c2! ♖b6 25.a4**



Black's counterplay has been stopped in its tracks, whereas the white kingside pawns are about to roll. Black has to give up a pawn to halt White's attack.

25...♗e6 26.h4 ♗c7 Two losing alternatives are 26...♗xg4?? 27.♗xd5+– and 26...d4?? 27.g5 hxg5 28.hxg5 ♗xg5 29.♗dg1 ♗e6 30.f4+–.

Isle of Man Masters

1. Magnus Carlsen **7½**

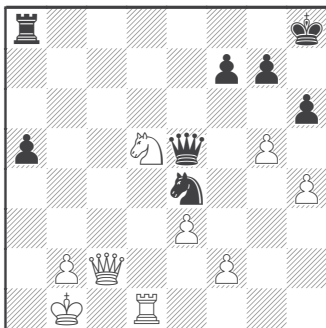
2-3. Vishy Anand, Hikaru Nakamura **7**

4-11. Vladimir Kramnik, Fabiano Caruana, Michael Adams, Pavel Eljanov, Santosh Gujrathi Vidit, Emil Sutovsky, Richard Rapport, Alexey Shirov, Sunil Dhopade Swapnil **6½**, etc.

27.♗xc5 ♗xb5 28.axb5 ♗b8 29.g5 ♖xb5 30.♗c2 ♗e4 31.♗e7+ ♗h8 32.♖xd5 ♖xd5 33.♗xd5 ♗e5 34.♖d1

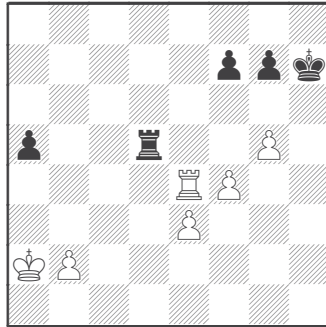


As a former top player, grandmaster **Ivan Sokolov** has won many tournaments, his most notable success on US soil being a win in the World Open in Philadelphia 2012. In Moscow 1994, he won the silver Olympiad medal as a member of the Bosnian team, while in Bled 2002 he represented his adopted country of the Netherlands for the first time. He has authored a number of best selling chess books: *Winning Chess Middlegames*, *Sacrifice & Initiative*, *Ivan's Chess Journey* and the latest one *Chess Middlegame Strategies*.



The smoke has cleared, White is a sound pawn up and Caruana steers the game to a winning rook endgame.

34...♖d8 35.♖d4 ♖xd5 36.♖xe4 ♖d1+ 37.♔a2 ♖d5+ 38.♖c4 hxg5 39.hxg5 ♔h7 40.♖xd5 ♖xd5 41.f4



Black has no counterplay, his king is far away and Black cannot prevent the loss of his a-pawn.

41...♔g6 42.♖d4 ♖b5 43.♔a3 ♔f5 44.b3 f6 45.♔a4 ♖b7 46.♖c4 ♖a7 47.♖c5+ ♔e4 48.♖xa5 ♖e7 49.gxf6 gxf6 50.♖a6 ♔f5 51.♖d6 ♖a7+ 52.♔b5 ♖b7+ 53.♔c4 ♖c7+ 54.♔d4 ♖b7 55.e4+ ♔xf4 56.♖xf6+ ♔g5 57.♖f5+ ♔g4 58.♔c4 ♖e7 59.♖d5 ♔f4 60.e5 ♔f5 61.b4 ♔e6 62.b5 ♖a7 63.b6 ♖b7 64.♖b5 ♔d7 65.♔d5 ♔c8 66.e6 ♔d8 67.♔c6

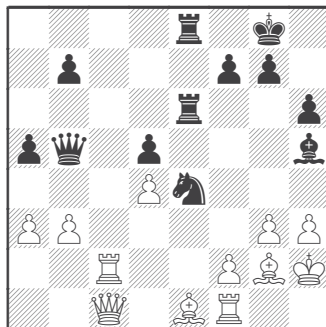
Black resigned

To be sure, Vladimir Kramnik had got off to a rocky start and this was made even worse in the third round when he made one of the biggest oversights of his career in a game against one of the oldest participants in the tournament.

James Tarjan 2412

Vladimir Kramnik 2803

chess.com Masters, Isle of Man 2017

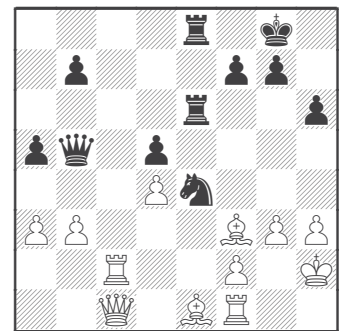


Kramnik had conducted the opening

stage well, easily equalized and then continued to improve his position. Here Black has a large advantage. White is very passive with no counterplay or a threat in sight, and so it is no surprise that Kramnik is looking for a forced win.

30...♔f3? This is a terrible oversight which throws away his advantage. 30...♔e2 would have left White in a permanently passive state, after which his position would soon be on the point of collapse – the more so in an over-the-board game against a former world champion! For example, play might continue 31.♖g1 ♔d3 or 31...♖f6 32.f4 ♔d3 both of which are very strong for Black.

31.♔xf3



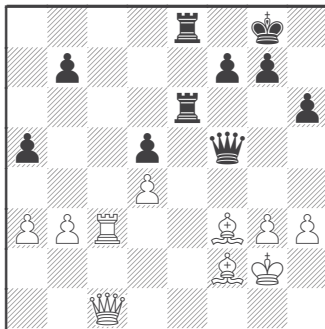
Kramnik must have deemed the text move to be impossible, completely missing that after 31...♖xf1 32.♔e2 his queen is trapped. Clearly shaken, he now panics and makes a losing mistake.

31...♔xg3?? 31...♖xf1 would have still salvaged a draw and, had he not been in such a state of shock, calculating this would have been a “piece of cake” for a player of Kramnik’s caliber! 32.♔e2 ♔xg3 33.♔xf1 ♔xf1+ 34.♔g2 ♖xe1 and actually White is the one who has to be careful about holding a draw: 35.♖b2! (35.♖f4 ♖e6,) 35...♖e6 36.♖c8+ ♔h7 37.♖c1 ♖g6+ 38.♔h1 ♔g3+ 39.♔h2 ♔f1+ etc.

32.fxg3 32.♖g1 was also winning after 32...♔f1+ 33.♖xf1 ♖xf1 34.♔xa5.

32...♖xf1 33.♔f2 ♖d3 34.♖c3 ♖f5 35.♔g2

Vladimir Kramnik and James Tarjan, Isle of Man 2017.
Photo by Maria Emelianova.



White has an easily won position and Black's only chance of salvation is a miracle before the time control.

35...♖f6 36.♔c2 ♕d7 37.g4 ♖c6 38.♖c5 ♖d8 39.♗f5 ♖xc5 40.♗xd7 ♖xd7 41.dxc5 d4 42.♔f1 The time control has been reached with Black in a hopeless situation, down in material and having no counterplay. It is obvious that White will soon create a passed pawn on the queenside which in turn will cost Black a rook. A frustrated Kramnik played on for another twenty moves or so, but to no avail.

Black resigned

Kramnik's woes continued in the fifth round when he could only draw against Lawrence Trent.

But then he won his remaining four games in style – with his last round win also having importance for opening theory.

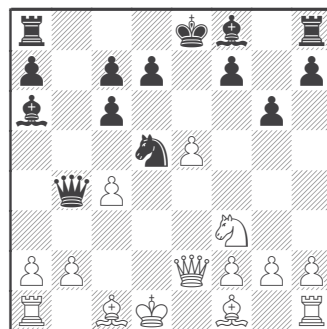
C45

Gawain Jones 2668

Vladimir Kramnik 2803

chess.com Masters, Isle of Man 2017

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.e5 ♗e7 7.♗e2 ♘d5 8.c4 ♖a6 9.♘d2 g6 10.♘f3 ♗b4+ 11.♔d1



This unusual kind of position, a typical product of computer preparation, has been seen a number of times at top level. I never really trusted having a king on

d1 for White, but on the other hand I had too much respect for my opponent's preparation in such lines to venture it with Black. Interestingly, Kramnik's move seems to be pretty much a novelty!

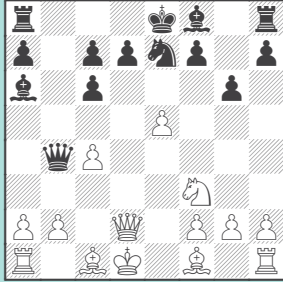
11...♗e7! According to my database, this move of Kramnik's has been seen in only two games played in Argentina in 2015 – against the same player as White! This is something of a mystery because 11...♗e7 is one of the top choices of the computer – which evaluates the position as pleasant for Black! – and it is the kind of position all players will check with their engines. Gawain Jones seems to have been rather taken by surprise at Kramnik's choice and Black relatively quickly gains an edge.

I will give here the other two games played in this line, not because they are the only games but because both of them were actually rather entertaining! 11...♗b6, 11...♖b8 or 11...♖g7 have all been tried at top level. In this rather original position it is, at least for me, not easy to suggest an effective plan for White. Just like one of the other White players, Jones now moves his queen – only to a different square.

12.♗c2

ALONSO'S 12. ♖d2 PLAN

12. ♖d2 was the choice of the Argentinian grandmaster Salvador Alonso in both games.



Salvador Alonso	2499
German Della Morte	2421

Buenos Aires 2015.

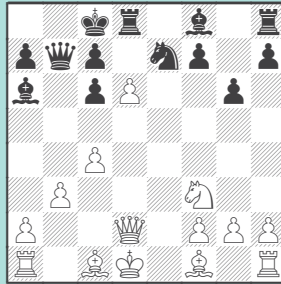
Against Della Morte play continued 12... ♗b7, hoping to quickly open the center by means of the ...d7-d5 pawn



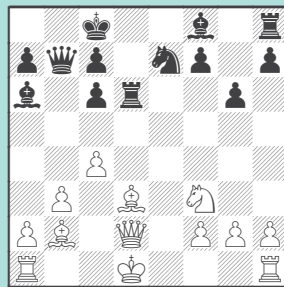
Salvador Alonso

push, and in order not to be subject to the tempo-gaining 14.c5 if Black plays instead 12... ♗b6.

Then followed 13.b3 d5 14.exd6 0-0-0



15. ♘b2 15. ♘d3! ♗xd6 16. ♘a3! seems to lead to an advantage for White as the tactical solution 16... ♘h6!? does not appear to be adequate: 17. ♗xh6 ♗xd3+ 18. ♖c2 ♘xc4 19. ♘xe7 ♗b5 20. ♘d2! ♗e5 21.bxc4 (21. ♘xc4 ♗c3+=) 21... ♗c3+ 22. ♖b1 ♗e8 (22... ♗xd2 23. ♗h3+) 23. ♗c1±. 15... ♗xd6 16. ♘d3



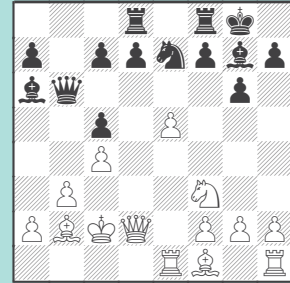
16... ♘xc4! Black is now fine. 17.bxc4 ♘h6 18. ♗e2 ♗hd8 18... ♗xd3+? 19. ♗xd3 ♗xb2 20. ♗b1 ♗xf2 21. ♗e1± since Black can never utilize the d-file because 21... ♗d8?? is a blunder due to 22. ♗b8+, as in the game. Now 19. ♘d4 ♘f5 20. ♘xf5+ gxf5 21. ♖c2 c5 is unclear.

Salvador Alonso	2499
Kevin Paveto	2424

Buenos Aires 2015

Alonso's second game, against Paveto, continued instead 12... ♗b6, which should have

been fine for Black, as he has a natural means of development whereas White, with his king in the middle of the board, still needs to unravel and coordinate his pieces. Then 13. ♖c2 ♘g7 14.b3 c5 15. ♘b2 ♗d8 16. ♗e1 0-0



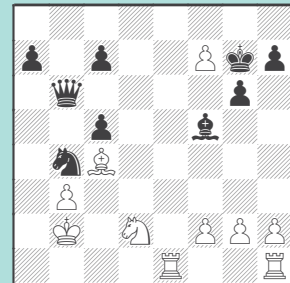
17. ♘d3 17.h4!? d5 18.e6∞ looks like typical play for White in this opening. 17... ♘c6 18. ♖b1 ♖b4 19. ♘e4 d5 20.cxd5 ♗xd5!? This enterprising but rather fancy move is not Black's best, whereas 20... ♘b7 would have given Black excellent play.

21. ♘xd5 ♘d3+ 22. ♖c1 ♗d8 Now White needs to find a tactical solution:

23. ♘c4 The way to go was 23. ♘xf7+! ♘xf7 24. ♘c3± with a razor sharp, and probably dynamically balanced position, which for quite some time both players conducted well!

23... ♘xa2+ 24. ♖d1 ♖b4 25.e6= ♘c2+ 26. ♖c1 ♘xb2+ 27. ♖xb2 ♗xd2 28. ♘xd2 28.exf7+ ♖g7 29. ♘xd2 transposes.

28... ♘f5 29.exf7+ ♖g7



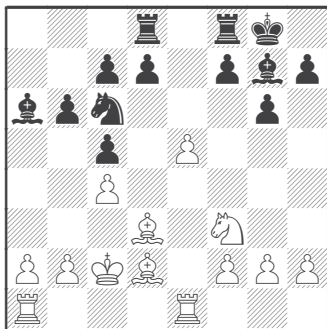
And now this lively game should have ended in perpetual check after 30. ♗e8 ♗f6+ 31. ♖a3 ♘c2+ 32. ♖a2 ♖b4+ but the game continued 30. ♖b1? ♘d3+ 31. ♘xd3 ♘xd3 when Black had a winning position, although the game was eventually drawn.

Back to the main game. After 12.♖c2 Kramnik continued with:

12...c5 13.♗d3 ♗g7 14.♞e1 0-0 Black has completed his development and is ready to open the position by pushing his d-pawn, by either ...d7-d5 or ...d7-d6. White's king is stuck in the center and he is also behind in development. The opening has definitely ended in Black favor, White is fighting to equalize. Obviously worried about the possible opening of the position with such an exposed king, Gawain goes for a queen trade.

15.♖b3 ♖c6 16.♗d2 ♖b6 17.♖xb6 axb6 The exchange of queens has made the position of the white king less vulnerable, however it has also improved Black's pawn structure.

18.♗c2 ♞ad8



Kramnik is ready to open the d-file and pose White direct problems. White task is not easy here. He has the choice of different paths but there is no clear cut way to equality. All continuations lead to some advantage for Black and the kind of positions that are difficult to play in practice – the more so if it is Kramnik sitting on the other side of the board!

19.a3 Or 19.♞ad1 d5 20.exd6 ♞xd6 21.b3 ♗c8.

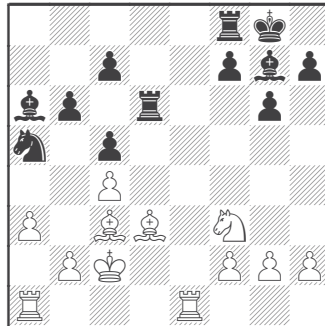
19...d6 19...d5 20.exd6 ♞xd6 was perhaps a more precise way for Black to reach the game position.

20.exd6 White had an alternative here in 20.♗g5.

20...♞xd6 21.♗c3 21.♞ad1 would have likely led to an exchange sacrifice.

After 21...♗xb2 22.♗f4 ♞f6! (22...♗xa3 23.♗xd6 cxd6 24.♗e4 ♖a5 25.♞xd6 ♖xc4 looks drawish, though Black is the one doing the pushing.) 23.♗g5 ♞xf3 24.gxf3 ♗d4 25.♗e3 ♗f6, with ...♗e5 or ...♗a5 to follow, Black collects a second pawn and has the advantage.

21...♗a5 21...♞fd8 22.♞ad1 ♖a5.

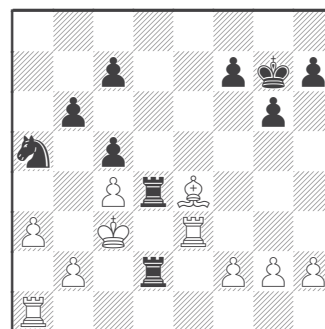


22.♗xg7 22.♞e7!, for the time being keeping the dark squared bishop (to control the d4-square), was a better defense. It looks to me as if White should hold 22...♗b7 (22...♞fd8 23.♗xg7 ♗xg7? is the way for Black's position to get worse: 24.♗e5± ♗f6? 25.♞xf7+ ♗e6 26.♞f3±. But better is 23...♞xd3 24.♗c3 ♗xc4 25.b4 with chances for both sides.) 23.♞ae1 ♗xf3 24.gxf3 and a draw looks like the most probable outcome here.

22...♗xg7 23.♗d2 23.♞e7 is now less efficient: 23...♗b7! (23...♗xc4 24.♗f1∞) 24.♞xc7 ♗xf3 25.gxf3 25...♗b3. Meanwhile 23.b4? simply blunders a pawn: 23...cxb4 24.axb4 ♗xc4.

23...♞fd8 24.♞e3 Kramnik now swings his bishop to the other side.

24...♗c8! 25.♗c3 ♗f5 26.♗xf5 ♞xd2 27.♗e4 ♞8d4! 27...♞xf2?? blunders a piece 28.b4+.



THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED: MOVE BY MOVE
By Nigel Davies
MSRP: \$27.95

The Queen's Gambit Declined is one of the central pillars of chess opening theory. Virtually every world champion has played the opening with both the white and black pieces and it is a great favourite at all levels in chess. Nigel Davies explains the positions in an easily understandable manner making it perfect for players of all levels.

EVERYMAN CHESS

28.b3? The final mistake. 28.♞f3! was the only way to put up a fight: 28...♞xb2 (28...♗xc4 wins a pawn, but White would then have active counterplay in the ensuing rook ending: 29.♗d3 ♗e5 30.♗xd2 ♗xf3+ 31.gxf3 c4 32.♗c3 ♞xd3+ 33.♗xc4 ♞xf3 34.b4 ♞xf2 35.a4⇒) 29.♗xb2 ♗xc4+ 30.♗c2 ♞xe4 is better for Black but there is work still to be done.

28...♞xf2 29.♞f3 Now Kramnik carries out the execution with merciless precision.

29...♞e2 30.♗d5 c6! 31.♗xf7 Or 31.♞xf7+ ♗h6 32.♗f3 ♞e3+.

31...♗b7! 32.b4 ♗d6

White resigned



A GRANDMASTER'S INSIGHTS FROM THE WORLD CUP

ONE DAY YOU GIVE A LESSON, THE NEXT DAY YOU LEARN A LESSON!

"I COULD HAVE WON IN A THOUSAND WAYS!" – YOUNG INDIAN GM S.P. SETHURAMAN RECALLS HIS FIRST EVER ENCOUNTER WITH A WORLD TOP TEN PLAYER. IN THE 3RD ROUND OF THE WORLD CUP HE NARROWLY MISSED ELIMINATING ANISH GIRI FROM THE COMPETITION AFTER FAILING TO CONVERT A BIG ADVANTAGE IN POSITION. HERE SETHU GIVES US AN INSIGHT INTO THE HARSH REALITY OF KNOCKOUT CHESS WITH HONEST AND REVEALING ANNOTATIONS.

by **GM S.P. SETHURAMAN**

AI

three matches in the World Cup were very memorable for me. The

first was very special as I knocked out former World Champion Ruslan Ponomarev, who was himself named as a knockout specialist in previous World Cups.

The first game in the match ended in a short draw in the currently fashionable Italian Game, which I had to face a number of times later – in the second and third matches against Harikrishna and Anish Giri. For me, a draw with the black pieces was a good result to start the event.

In the second game I had the white pieces, which some people would call a small advantage in a mini-match, but for me colours were not such a big deal. However, although there is no denying the fact that having the white pieces made me feel a little more comfortable, good chess is still needed with both colours in order to win a match.



S.P. Sethuraman. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

C92

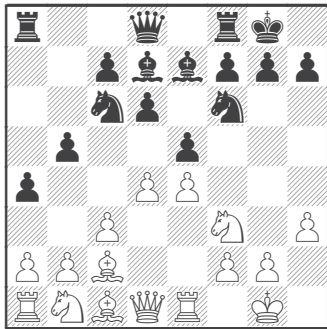
S.P. Sethuraman	2618
Ruslan Ponomariov	2692

World Cup, Tbilisi (1.2) 2017

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.c3 Inviting my opponent to play the tempting Marshall, but he had other plans.

8...d6 9.h3 a5 A very rare line and a total surprise to me as I was expecting something like a Chigorin or Breyer defence from my opponent.

10.d4 a4 11.♗c2 ♗d7



My opponent was very happy with the outcome of the opening as he had deviated from all the main lines and taken me by surprise; moreover he hadn't spent as much as a single minute, whereas I had taken something like 20 minutes to reach this position. Nevertheless I always had the feeling that what he was doing is completely contrary to chess principles, such as pushing the a-pawn without developing his pieces first and not fighting for the center. But, you know, this is modern chess. Of course it might not be objectively a good choice, but nowadays anything goes!

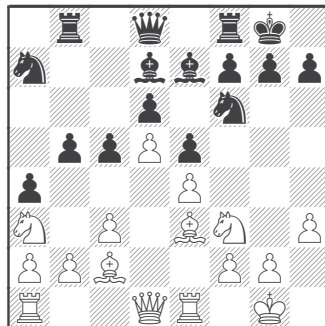
12.♘a3! During the game I greatly preferred this move to the normal development of the knight to d2, as it exerts pressure on the b5 pawn and thereby exploits the premature advance of ...a6-a5-a4. But later, after the game, I was surprised to discover that this position had already been played in many tournament games and immediately noticed an elite encounter, starting this

way, played eight years ago between Ivanchuk and Carlsen.

12...♞b8 13.d5 ♘a7 14.♗e3 14.c4 ♞a8 15.♗e3 b4 16.♘b1 c5 17.a3 b3 18.♗d3 ♘xe4 19.♗xe4 f5 20.♘fd2 fxe4 21.♞h5 ♗e8 22.♞e2 ♗d7 23.♞h5 ♗e8 24.♞e2 ♗d7 ½-½ was V.Ivanchuk 2779 – M.Carlsen 2776, Wijk aan Zee 2009.

I HAD THE FEELING THAT WHAT PONOMARIOV WAS DOING IS COMPLETELY CONTRARY TO CHESS PRINCIPLES, SUCH AS PUSHING THE A-PAWN WITHOUT DEVELOPING HIS PIECES FIRST AND NOT FIGHTING FOR THE CENTRE. BUT, YOU KNOW, THIS IS MODERN CHESS.

14...c5 After **14...♘c8 15.c4 bxc4 16.♘xc4** the pawn on a4 is too weak.

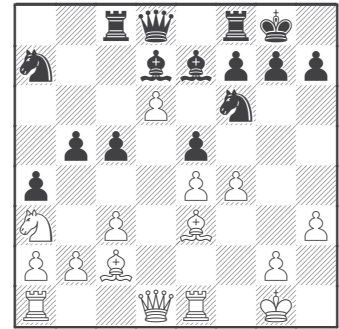


15.♘xe5! This typical sacrifice occurs in

many variations of the Ruy Lopez, when the bishop on e7 has nowhere to move.

15...dxe5 16.d6 ♞c8 If **16...♘c8 17.♗xc5 ♗xd6 18.♗xd6 ♘xd6 19.♞xd6 ♗e8 20.♞ad1±.**

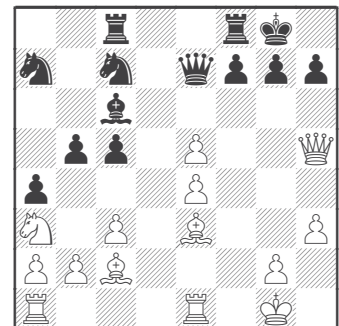
17.f4!



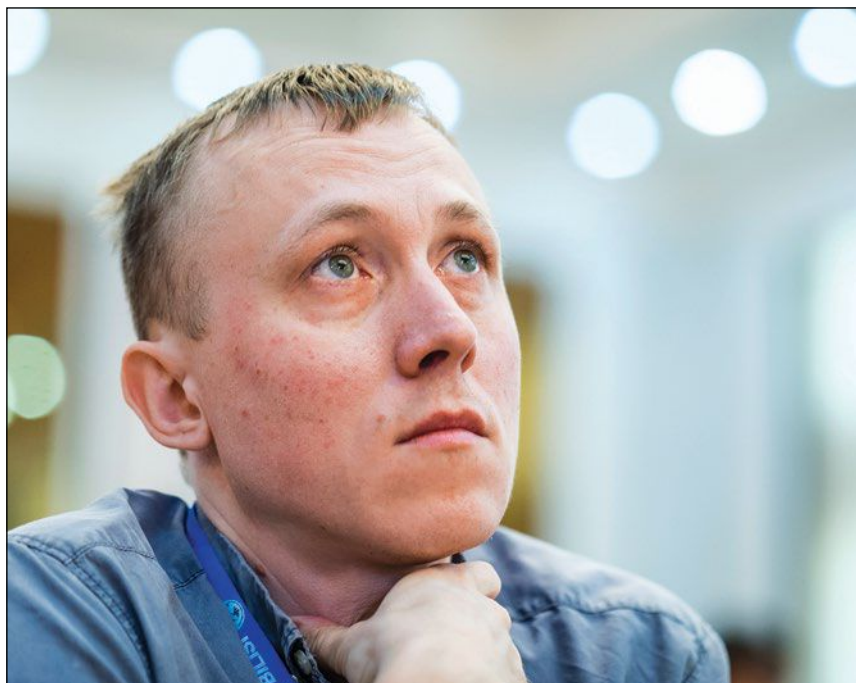
Maintaining the dynamic tension. I was very proud of this move and it turned out to be very strong, which was later also confirmed by the computer. The point is to open up lines for my bishops, after eliminating the e5 pawn which is what is holding Black's position together, or to sharpen White's attack with f5-g4-g5.

17...♘e8?! After **17...♗e6 18.dxe7 ♞xe7 19.f5 (19.♞f3!?) 19...♗d7 20.♞f3** White has simply increased his possibilities and has a dream position to start an attack with g4-g5.

18.dxe7 ♞xe7 19.fxe5 ♗c6 20.♞h5 ♘c7



21.♘b1! This follows one of the principles often mentioned by the legendary Mark Dvoretsky in his great books: the principle of the worst piece. Here the knight on a3 is not participating in the attack, so where would it be ideally placed? And then comes the answer. Once



▶ Ruslan Ponomarev, World Cup 2017.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

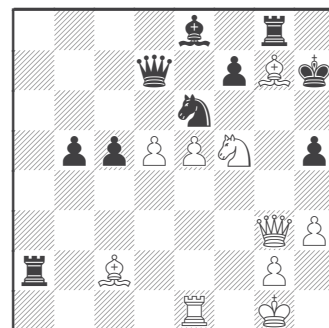
(35...♔d7 36.♖f3+-) 36.♖f6 etc.

31.♔d1 ♖b1 32.♖h4 A total massacre. What a lovely position for White with all his pieces directed against Black's king.

32...h5 33.♖g3 33.♖xh5 g6 34.♖g4 also wins.

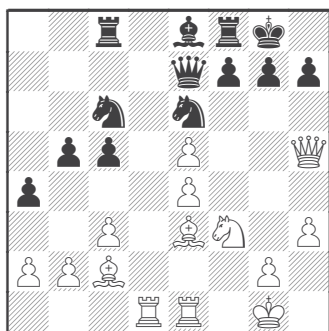
33...♖xc3 34.♖f5 ♖xd5 35.exd5! A simply wonderful sight: domination of the whole board.

35...♖d7 36.♔h6 ♖h7 37.♔xg7 ♖g8 38.♔c2 ♖xa2



again, executing such moves gives a player the immense satisfaction of having a good understanding of chess principles.

21...♔e8 22.♖d2 ♖c6 23.♖f3 ♖e6 24.♖ad1



All the white pieces are ideally developed and looking for a breakthrough against the black king!

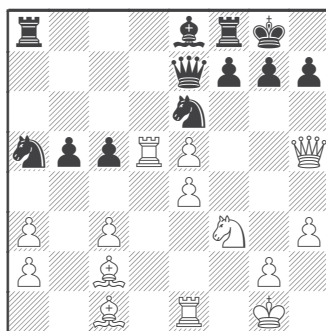
24...♖d8?! 24...♖cd4 25.cxd4 (25.♖xd4 cxd4 26.♔xd4 ♖xd4 27.♖xd4 ♖c5 28.♖d5) 25...cxd4 26.♔xa4! (26.♖xd4 ♖xd4 27.♔b1 ♖e6 28.♖d5±) 26...bxa4 (26...dxe3 27.♔b3±) 27.♖xd4 ♖xd4 28.♔xd4±.

25.♖d5 a3 Trying to create chaos in the position. Black is positionally lost and has to do something.

26.bxa3 Simply grabbing the pawn,

since it has the potential to generate counterplay in the future.

26...♖a8 27.♔c1 ♖a5



28.♖g5 Here there are many ways for White to increase his advantage; 28.a4 or 28.♖h4 ♖c4 29.♖f5 ♖c7 30.a4 are both winning.

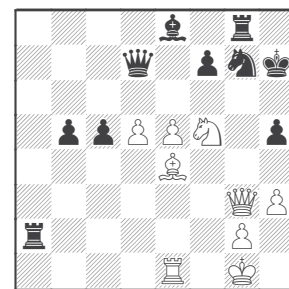
28...h6 29.♖f3 I liked my maneuver which had created a weakness for Black on h6. White has all the time in the world since the black pieces are completely disorganized.

29...♖c4 30.♖g4 30.a4! is stronger.

30...♖xa3 If 30...♖h8, then 31.♖h4 was my intention, when White wins after 31...♖c7 32.♖f1! ♖xa3 33.♔xh6 ♖xc2 34.♖f6! or 34.♔xg7+ ♖xg7 35.♖g5 ♖a6

With only two minutes left on the clock, I was getting nervous trying to find the simplest possible way to win.

39.♖h6+ Having calculated some variations in time pressure but not found a win, I was getting agitated because I knew I had already missed several easy wins. 39.♔e4 was the first candidate move I examined. After 39...♖xg7 (39...♖a4 40.♖d4+ wins)



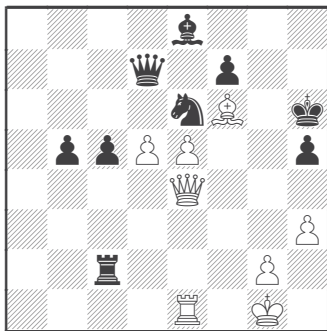
40.♖g5 ♖xg2+! was the counter move I was afraid of, but I simply missed the fact that I could play 40.♖e7+! first and then carry out

the same idea: 40...♔h8 41.♖g5 ♖a6 42.e6! ♖xe6 43.dxe6 ♗xe6 (43...♗d4+ 44.♔h1 wins) 44.♖xg8 ♔xg8 45.♕h7+ winning. Then I started drifting and made my task unnecessarily complicated. I analysed 39.♗e3 ♖xg7 40.♗h6+ ♔g8 41.♖xg7 ♖xc2 (41...♖xg7 42.♗h7+ ♔f8 43.d6!+-) but simply overlooked I could then take on h5 with my knight.

39...♖xc2 40.♖xg8 The time pressure phase is over and here too I had the feeling that what I was doing was also easily winning.

40...♔xg8 41.♕f6+ ♔h7 41...♔f8 42.d6 wins.

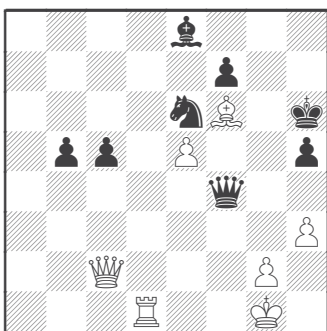
42.♖d3+ ♔h6 43.♗e3+ ♔h7 44.♗e4+ ♔h6



45.♗xc2 I thought grabbing the material was the easiest way but in fact I had a crushing move available which would have forced my opponent's immediate resignation: 45.♖f1!, which leaves Black with a hopeless position, e.g. 45...♖c4 46.♗e3+ ♔h7 47.♖f5 winning.

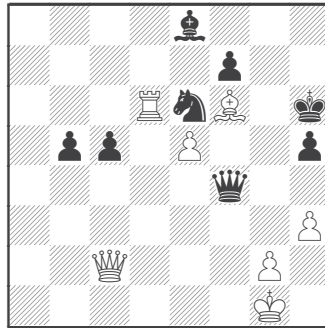
45...♗xd5 46.♖d1 The right way to decide the game is by 46.♖f1.

46...♗c4 47.♗d2+ ♔g6 48.♗f2 ♗f4 49.♗c2+ ♔h6



Luckily for me, even this position is good enough for a win, but it still requires time and energy to convert. Of course, all of this was really unnecessary, considering the position I had a few minutes ago, but sometimes life is like that. During a game you should never be overcome with disappointment if you miss an easy win, but instead focus on the present and not on the past, since your position may still be good enough to bring home the full point!

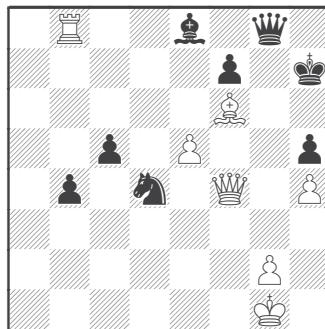
50.♖d6?! The rook needs to be on f1 to target the black king, so 50.♖f1 ♗e3+ 51.♔h2 does the job.



50...b4? The only move was 50...♗e3+, when Black has good chances of making a draw as he can exchange the queens, which is like a dream come true for him now! If 51.♔h1 then 51...♗e1+ 52.♔h2 h4 53.♗f5 ♗g3+ 54.♔g1 ♗e1+ etc.

51.h4! ♗g4 52.♖b6! ♗g3 53.♖b8 Finally!

53...♖d4 54.♗e4 ♗g8 55.♗f4+ ♔h7



56.♗e4+ ♔h6 57.♕g5+ ♔g7 58.♗a8 **Black resigned**

A nice finish but most of all I was just relieved to get into the second round

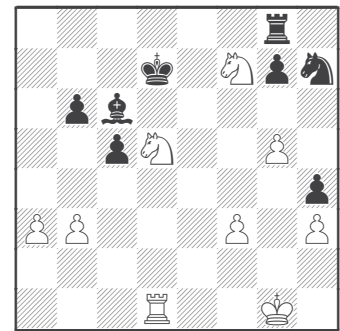
after blowing all those wins in what was a beautifully played middle game.

I was now paired against my fellow countryman GM Pentala Harikrishna. Is this World Cup 2015? No 2017!! Yes, strangely enough, we also faced against each other in the second round of the 2015 World Cup in a game which ended in my favour.

S.P. Sethuraman	2640
Pentala Harikrishna	2737

World Cup, Baku (2.1) 2015

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♖c6 3.♕b5 ♖f6 4.0-0 ♖xe4 5.d4 ♖d6 6.♕xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♖f5 8.♗xd8+ ♔xd8 9.h3 b6 10.♖d1+ ♔e8 11.♖c3 h6?! 12.b3 ♕b7 13.♕b2 ♖d8 14.♖xd8+? ♔xd8 15.♖d1+ ♔c8 16.g4 ♖e7 17.♔h2 ♖g6 18.♔g3 ♕e7 19.♖e4 c5 20.♖e1 h5?! 21.♖f5 h4+ 22.♔h2 ♖f8 23.f3 ♕c6 24.♔g1! ♖f4?! 25.♕c1 ♖d5 26.a3! f5 27.exf6 ♖xf6 28.♖e6 ♖g8 29.♖d4g5 ♕d6 30.♕f4 a5 31.♕xd6 cxd6 32.♖f4 a4 33.♖f7 axb3 34.cxb3 ♔d7? 35.♖d1 d5 36.g5 ♖h7 37.♖xd5



37...♔e6? 38.g6 ♖f6 39.♖xf6 gxf6 40.♖d8+ ♔f5 41.♖xc6 ♖xg6+ 42.♔f2 ♖g3 43.♖e7+ ♔f4 44.♖d5+ ♔e5 45.♖d3 b5 46.♖c3 **Black resigned**

But now, two years later, I had started with a short draw with the black pieces in a Berlin Defense, and another in a very complicated battle – which forced a playoff.

In fact this was the first time I had entered a playoff stage in the World Cup, since in 2015 I won my first two matches without any need for a tiebreak, just like the first round here against Ruslan Ponomarev. So it was a completely new experience for me, whereas, after some hiccups, my opponent had only got past the first round after playing several tiebreak games. But although he had experience of dealing with tiebreaks and I didn't, would he be tired after playing those tough games every day? Very hard to say but we did have an interesting fight. The first game ended in a draw after I failed to realise a big advantage; but in the second encounter I managed to play a fine positional game without making a single mistake!

C54

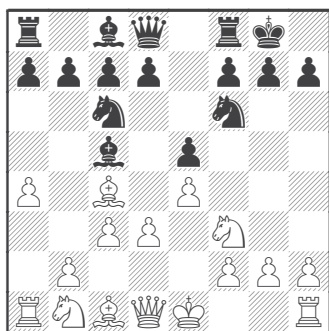
Pentala Harikrishna	2743
S.P. Sethuraman	2618

World Cup, Tbilisi (2.4) 2017

1.e4 It was already clear that the game would not take long to heat up!

1...e5 2.d3 2...c6 3.c4 The Italian Game is very fashionable nowadays as it bypasses all the heavy theory in the Ruy Lopez – which of course includes the Berlin Defense.

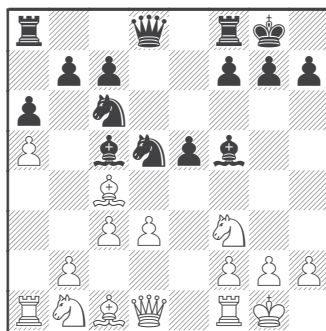
3...c5 4.c3 4...f6 5.d3 0-0 6.a4



There are many move orders for both sides and this is one such sequence where Black gets to play ...d7-d5. However, in return, White can make use of the a2-a4 move to expand immediately by a4-a5, which is not possible in the case of 6.0-0.

6...d5! 7.exd5 7...xd5 8.a5 a6 9.0-0

8.f5 I was still in my preparation.



10.g5?! 10...b2 b5! 11.axb6 11...xb6 12.b3 12...e7 13.xa6 13...xa6 14.xa6 14...xd3 15.a1 15...xf1 16.xd8 16...xd8 17.xf1 f6 and Black had a comfortable game in E.Alekseev 2636 – A.Predke 2587, Sochi 2016; **10.b3 10...f6 11.xb7 (11...g5 11...xd3?) 11...d7 12.b3 12...xd3 13.xd3 13...xd3 14.a4 14...d5.**

10...e7 11.e7 11...b3 can be met by **11...xg5 12.xd5 12...b8.**

11...dxe7 12.h4 Or **12.e1 d6g6.**

12...e6! 13.d2 After **13.xe6 fxe6** Black gets his knight to f4, thereby completely justifying the shattering of his centre pawns!

THE ITALIAN GAME IS VERY FASHIONABLE NOWADAYS AS IT BYPASSES ALL THE HEAVY THEORY IN THE RUY LOPEZ – WHICH OF COURSE INCLUDES THE BERLIN DEFENSE.

13...d5 14.g3 14...f4! Nevertheless the knight still reaches its destination.

15.d3 15...e4 15...xc4 16.dxc4 f5 17.xd8 17...axd8 18.c5 18...e2+ 19.g2 19...d2 would offer chances for both sides.

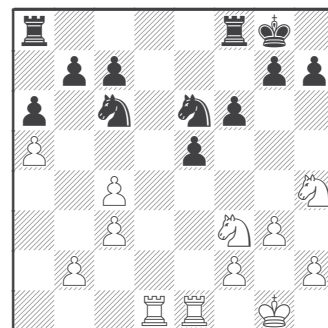
15...xc4 15...h3+ 16.g2 16...c8!?

is of course a computer idea, and so is **17.g1!** However Black gets a pleasant position. On the other hand **16...d7** is too subtle and can be answered by **17.d4! g5 (17...exd4 18.dxd4) 18.dxe5 dxe5 19.dxe5 gxh4 20.e6! fxe6 21.xh3.**

16.dxc4 16...e6 First of all I wanted to play **16...d3** but was not sure what the knight was doing there, as White can exchange it off anytime by **16.e1.**

17.e1?! 17...e2 was the only move, since White has to keep the queens on the board so as not to end up defending an unpleasant ending. Then can follow **17...f6 18.b4=.**

17...xd1 18.xad1 f6



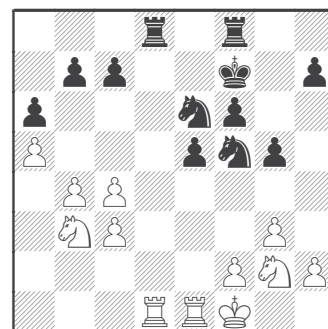
I was happy with my position as I had a good pawn structure.

19.b4 19...ad8 20.d2 20...f1 is best.

20...f7 Bringing up the king is an important procedure in the endgame.

21.b3 21...e7! The knight on c6 is restricted by the white pawns, so re-routing it to a better square makes sense.

22.f1 g5! 23.g2 23...f5



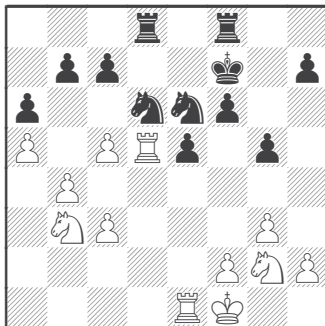


▲ Pentala Harikrishna vs. S.P. Sethuraman, World Cup 2017. Photo by Lennart Ootes.

Already White's position is unpleasant and his pieces have been slowly moving backwards. But here he loses the thread. It's very difficult to defend such positions for a long period of time in rapid chess.

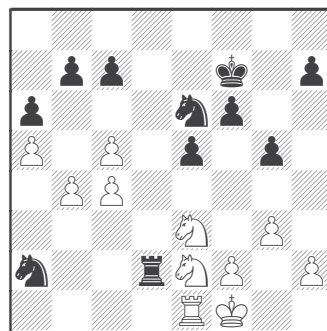
24.♖d5 A better try is 24.♗e2, trying to exchange some pieces by 24.♖e3, as the knight is clearly badly placed on g2. Then could follow 24...h5 25.♖e3 ♖d6.

24...♖d6 25.c5? A mistake which allows the entry of the black knight. Better was the defensive 25.♖d2 h5.



25...♖b5! The knight will now jump all over the place, attacking one vulnerable white pawn after another.

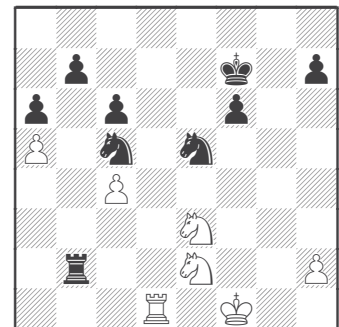
26.c4 ♖c3 27.♗xd8 ♗xd8 28.♖e3 ♗d3 29.♖c1 ♗d2 30.♖e2 ♖a2



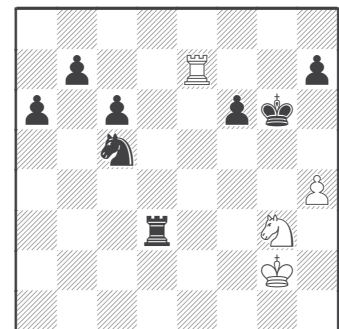
31.♖d5 31.♗b1 ♗xe2 was the nice little trick: 32.♗xe2 ♖c3+ 33.♖d3 ♖xb1 34.♗c2 ♖a3+ 35.♗b3 ♖xc4 36.♗xc4 ♖d4.

31...♗b2 Now the rest is just a matter of technique.

32.f4 gxf4 33.gxf4 ♖xb4 34.fxe5 ♖d3 35.♗d1 ♖xe5 36.♗c1 c6 37.♖e3 ♖xc5 38.♗d1



38...♗b3 39.♖c2 ♖xc4 40.♗d8 ♖e3+ 41.♖xe3 ♗xe3 42.♖g3 ♗a3 43.♗h8 ♗g7 44.♗e8 ♗xa5 45.h4 ♗a3 46.♗g2 ♗d3 47.♗e7+ ♗g6



48.h5+ ♗h6 49.♗h3 ♗g5 50.♗g7+ ♗f4 51.♗h4 ♗d7 52.h6 a5 53.♖e2+

♔e5 54.♟c3 b5 55.♖g1 b4 56.♗e1+
♟d6 57.♟e2 b3 58.♟d4 a4 59.♖c1
b2 60.♖b1 ♖b7 61.♟c2 ♖b3 62.♜g4
♟e4 0-1

I was really happy and excited to be able to repeat my World Cup 2015 performance – winning for the second time and qualifying for the third round.

My third matchup was against the very solid GM Anish Giri, a player with an Elo rating of 2780+. It was my first encounter with a world top ten player, but I felt very confident that I could do something against him. Indeed, after drawing our first game, I was on the road to beating him convincingly in the second, but just failed to finish the job. So it's not so pleasant for me to revisit this game since I could have won in a thousand ways!

Indeed, the feeling I get looking back and wondering how I wasn't able to win this game cannot be described in words. But we are all human and anything can happen. Energy, exhaustion and other factors also play a role. The most important thing is to learn from your mistakes so as not to repeat them in the future.

The spectators who were watching this game were shocked at the final result, in view of the position I had reached earlier, and even now people will tell me that I was simply having a very bad day. But it's all part of the game, after all I have also won or saved lost positions – that's not the main issue. Far more important is to understand why it has happened and then draw the right conclusions. It seems that some lessons just have to be learnt from bitter experience and the following game is one such example. So let's take a look at this roller coaster ride with its many psychological moments.

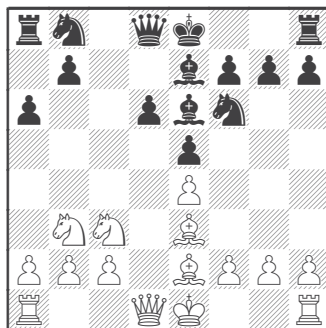
B92

S.P. Sethuraman	2618
Anish Giri	2772

World Cup, Tbilisi (3.2) 2017

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4
♟f6 5.♟c3 a6 I was expecting the
Najdorf from Anish, since nowadays it
is one of the principal weapons in his
opening repertoire with the black pieces.

6.♟e2 e5 7.♟b3 ♟e7 8.♟e3 ♟e6



9.♞d3!? A currently fashionable choice against the Najdorf. It prepares ♟d5.

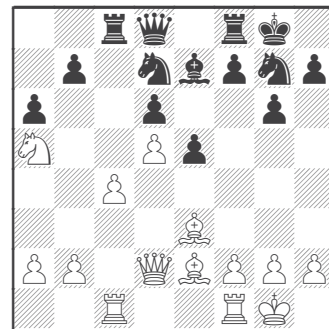
9...0-0 10.0-0 ♟bd7 11.♟d5 ♟xd5
12.exd5 ♖c8 13.c4 I think I can say that
I had managed to surprise Anish, one
of the world's most renowned opening

experts, as he now began to think for a few minutes.

13...g6 14.♖ac1 ♟e8 15.♞d2
Preparing ♟a5!.

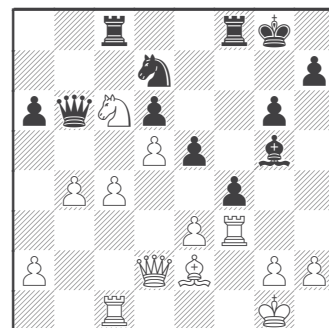
15...♟g7 15...f5 can be met by 16.♟h6
(16.f4) 16...♖f7 17.♟a5.

16.♟a5



16...♟f5? After a long think, my
opponent went for this sacrifice in the
belief that he had compensation for
the pawn. But this was not the case.
However, even after 16...♖c7 17.♟d3
(17.b4 ♟f5) 17...f5 18.f3 and then b4,
White has a good position.

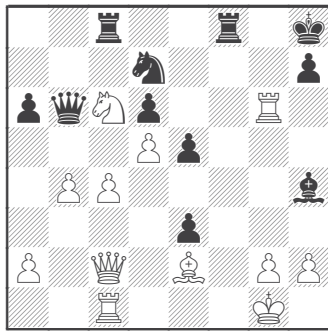
17.♟xb7 ♞c7 18.♟a5 ♟xe3 19.fxe3
♟g5 20.b4 ♞b6 21.♖f3 f5 22.♟c6 f4



23.♞c2! A very important resource,
planning to play c4-c5 and at the same
time stopping Black's ...e5-e4 and
preparing the ♖g3-♖xg6 sacrifice after
Black takes the pawn on e3.

23...fxe3 24.♖g3 ♟h4 25.♖xg6+!
After the game my opponent said that
he had missed the whole idea connected
with ♞c2 and ♖xg6.

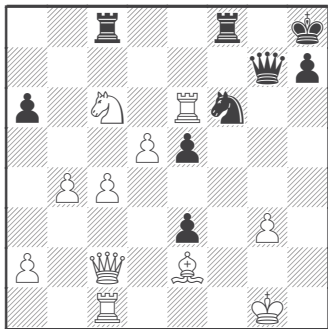
25...♟h8



26. Bxd6 The first simple win was by 26. Bxd6 which simply reduces Black's counterplay. Then if 26... Qf2+ 27. Kh1 Qf7 (27... Qf6 28. Qf5+-) 28. c5 or 28. Bxd6 is decisive.

26... Qf6 27. g3 Qc7 28. Be6 28. c5 is winning.

28... Qxg3 29. hxg3 Qg7



With a lost position, my opponent can only try to conjure up a few tricks.

30. Qf3 Another two winning lines were 30. g4 Qxg4 31. Bg6!!; and 30. Qg2 Bg8 31. g4 Qxg4 32. Bg6.

30... e2 After 30... Qxg3+ White has the decisive 31. Qg2 Qf4 32. Qxe5 e2 33. Bb1! or 33. Qd3, but not 33. Be1? Qd4+.

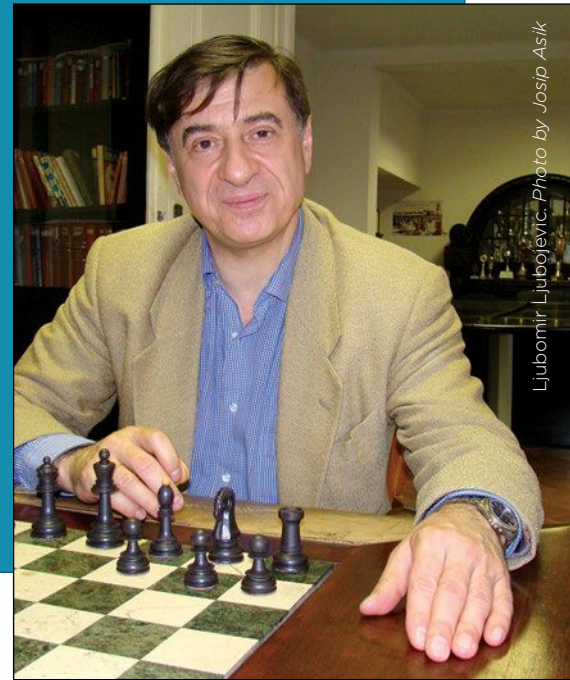
31. g4! 31. Qf2 or 31. Qg2 Bg8 32. Qf2! are also sufficient.

31... Qxd5 31... Qxg4 loses to simply 32. Qxe2 or even 32. Be7 Qh6 33. Qxh7+ Qxh7 34. Bxh7+ Qxh7 35. Qxe2.

32. Qxe2 I looked as far as 32. Qe4 Qf4 33. Be7 Qh6 34. Qxe5+ Bf6 35. g5 Qh3+, but then stopped. However, after a few more moves White is completely winning: 36. Qg2 Qxg5 37. Bb1 Qxf3

Miles away from Tbilisi, I had the pleasure of joining the legendary Ljubomir Ljubojevic, who was following the World Cup online in a local café. Always temperamental, "Ljubo" was swiftly jumping from game to game until he suddenly stopped and exclaimed: "Hey, this kid is totally winning – he's going to beat Giri." I was glad to be able to add a few words about Sethu, since he was one of the most talented writers whom I had introduced some years before to Chess Informant. Obviously it was a David vs. Goliath encounter, and so we kept a close watch on the rest of the game. But then in the later stages I was shocked to see how things had developed: "OMG, what is happening here, Ljubo?" ...and I just knew our readers would want to read the inside story of this game!

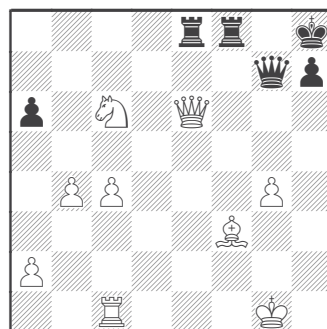
Josip Asik



Ljubomir Ljubojevic. Photo by Josip Asik

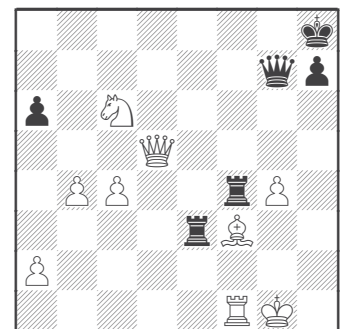
38. Bxh6 Bg8+ 39. Qf2 Qxe5+ 40. Bxf6 Qg4+ 41. Qxe2 etc.

32... Qd4 33. Qxe5 Qxe6 34. Qxe6 Bce8



35. Qd5 During the game I calculated up to this point and assessed it as being the easiest way to convert the game to a win. However I also spent time examining a number of other options. This was the first mistake. Instead of simply playing the most natural moves, I began to waste time and energy unnecessarily.

35... Bf4 36. Bf1 Bc3 37. Qd8+ Bf8 38. Qd5 Bf4



39. Bf2?? Be1+? Both of us had missed the tricky resource 39... Bxf3! 40. Bxf3 Bxg4+ 41. Qf2 Qb2+ 42. Qe3 Qc1+ 43. Qd3 Qa3+ with a draw.

40. Qh2 Qh6+

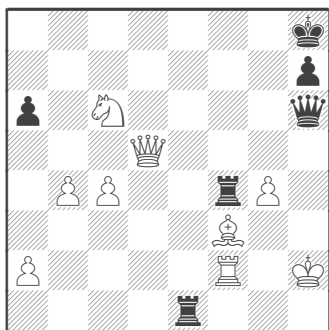
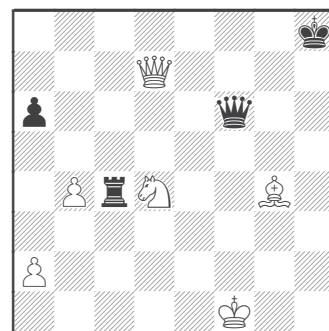


Anish Giri, World Cup 2017.
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

black rook on e1 was on c1 and I now have the strong 45.♔d1, finishing the game. This was one of the reasons that I didn't go for the queen exchange on d8, only to realise later, after ten minutes thought, that the black rook is on e1. A complete blackout, what else can I say?

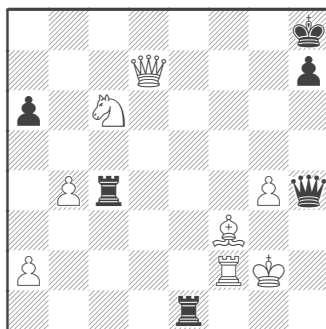
45.♔d4 h5 White is still winning, but by now I was down to three minutes on the clock and began to panic.

46.♖f1 hxg4 47.♙xg4 ♖xf1 48.♕xf1 ♗f6+



41...♗h4 42.♖d7 Of course exchanging queens by 42.♖d8+ ♗xd8 43.♔xd8 was easier but during the game I was not sure if it was clearly winning after 43....♖xc4. But it is after 44.♖b2. I was looking for a more convincing way to wrap up the game but sometimes you just have to play simple chess, especially when you are tiring fast and your mind is playing tricks with you.

42...♖xc4 43.♖c8+ ♔g7 44.♖d7+ ♔h8



The first forty moves are over and I have a winning position. What more could I ask for? However, by now I was so low on energy that I started calculating some strange lines and with each move made my task even more complicated.

41.♔g2 I looked at 41.♔g3 but after 41...♖xf3+ 42.♖xf3 ♖g1+ 43.♔f2 ♗h2+ 44.♔e3 ♖e1+ for some inexplicable reason I stopped, thinking that Black had a perpetual. But in fact my king can just run to the other side by 45.♔d4 ♗g1+ 46.♔c3 ♖c1+ 47.♔b3 ♖b1+ 48.♔a4 winning.

For a moment I simply assumed that the

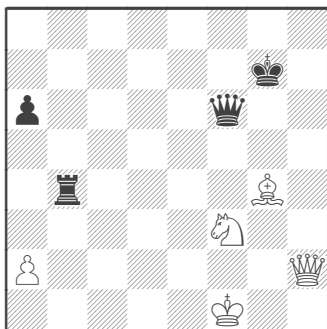
While I was contemplating ♔f5, after about one minute of thought my opponent offered me a draw. And, I have to say, this was not the right way to do it, since if you want to offer a draw you have to do it immediately after playing your move not after a time lapse even of just one minute. Curiously, history repeated itself a little later in a Ding vs. Aronian game where the Chinese player offered a draw in an inappropriate manner and Levon had to explain the rule to him. Of course I knew all this too, but during the game I did not want to get distracted, and with only one minute left I couldn't think of anything other than my position. It's strange that sometimes even top players make such mistakes even if these are only due to negligence and not intentionally.

49.♔f3?? After having bypassed so many wins, it was so disappointing to now spoil everything. After this passive retreat White loses all his advantage. Of course I saw 49.♔f5 and was just about to

AFTER ABOUT ONE MINUTE OF THOUGHT MY OPPONENT OFFERED ME A DRAW. AND, I HAVE TO SAY, THIS WAS NOT THE RIGHT WAY TO DO IT, SINCE IF YOU WANT TO OFFER A DRAW YOU HAVE TO DO IT IMMEDIATELY AFTER PLAYING YOUR MOVE NOT AFTER A TIME LAPSE EVEN OF JUST ONE MINUTE.

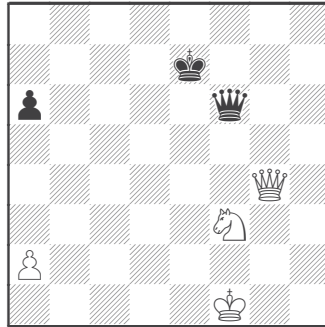
play it when for no reason I changed my mind and played 49.♘f3, concerned that Black might have some perpetual, but the fact is that this alternative move is simply bad and I should not even have given it a single thought.

49...♙xb4 50.♖c8+ ♔g7 51.♖c7+ ♔h6 52.♖h2+ ♔g7

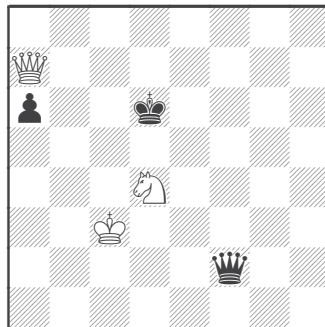


And Black has escaped from the jaws of defeat.

53.♖c7+ ♔h6 54.♖c1+ ♔g7 55.♖d1 ♙xg4 56.♖d7+ ♔f8 57.♖c8+ ♔e7 58.♖xg4



58...♖a1+ 59.♔g2 ♖xa2+ 60.♔g3 ♖e6 61.♖g7+ ♔d6 62.♖a7 ♖g6+ 63.♔f4 ♖f6+ 64.♔e3 ♖c3+ 65.♔e4 ♖b4+ 66.♔d4 ♖e1+ 67.♔d3 ♖d1+ 68.♔c3 ♖a1+ 69.♔c2 ♖a2+ 70.♔d3 ♖b1+ 71.♔e3 ♖g1+ 72.♔d2 ♖f2+ 73.♔c3

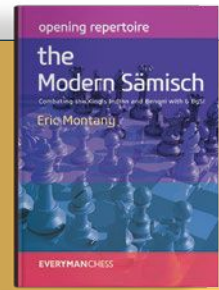


73...♖e1+ 74.♔b2 ♖b4+ 75.♔b3 a5 76.♖a6+ ♔c7 77.♖xa5+ ♖xa5 78.♔xa5 **Draw**

CONCLUSION

But, overall, I would say the World Cup was one of my finest performances, taking into account the quality of my play, my defeat of two strong opponents rated 70-80 Elo points above me and then coming so very close to beating Anish. All this has given me enormous confidence that I can beat any strong player on the day. But I still have to learn the lessons from this game: how to keep up the pressure and control my nerves. And come back even stronger next time!

Round 1	Ponomarev Ruslan (UKR)	1/2	0	1/2				
	S.P. Sethuraman (IND)	1/2	1	1 1/2				
Round 2	Harikrishna P. (IND)	1/2	1/2	1/2	0	1 1/2		
	S.P. Sethuraman (IND)	1/2	1/2	1/2	1	2 1/2		
Round 3	Anish Giri (NED)	1/2	1/2	1	0	1	1	4
	S.P. Sethuraman (IND)	1/2	1/2	0	1	0	0	2



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EVERYMAN CHESS

Phew! What a bitter experience it was not to win this game. The match then went into tiebreaks. I lost my first rapid game but bounced back in the second with a crushing finish. But in the next two ten minute games I simply lost the thread and my opponent showed his superiority. ■

The Crown Jewel: WIM Annie Wang

SHE DID IT. AT 15, ANNIE WANG IS ALREADY A WORLD CHAMPION. LAST FALL, THE CALIFORNIA-BORN AMERICAN GIRL TOOK HOME THE GOLD MEDAL AT THE 2017 WORLD YOUTH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP U16 GIRLS WITH AN IMPRESSIVE SCORE OF 10½/11, TWO AND A HALF POINTS AHEAD OF THE RUNNER-UP FROM RUSSIA. HER PERFORMANCE RATING? AN INCREDIBLE 2589 – PRACTICALLY THAT OF A GRANDMASTER. THE RISING STAR WAS THE PRIDE OF THE NATION.



Annie Wang, Porto Carras 2015. Photo by Diana Matison.

By **WIM YUANLING YUAN** |||||

5-year-old Annie first became curious about chess when she noticed a simul going on at a nearby park. Initially, she just thought that “the pieces looked interesting” but when her parents started sending her to the local Beyond Chess Academy for weekly lessons, chess quickly became much more than the strange shape of the bishops. “I like thinking and seeing the patterns on the board. It’s like solving puzzles. I feel a sense of accomplishment whenever I do well.” According to Annie’s father Ou Wang, the most memorable occasion during Annie’s childhood was when she won her first chess tournament and was awarded a trophy taller than her!

Between the first monumental trophy and the U16 World Championship title lay ten years of hard work, sweat and perpetual failures. A well-deserved victory does not occur overnight. Over the years, Annie made a conscious effort to work on chess almost every single day. On weekdays, at least one hour daily. On weekends the commitment would double as schoolwork takes a backseat. Maintaining such a level of discipline is particularly difficult for most children at a young age. However, for Annie, spending time on chess was more play than work. It was always at the forefront of all the activities in her life. “Chess is my life. It’s always chess first, then school, then everything else”, Annie told me with a smile.

Catch a Rising Star

with Yuanling Yuan



Prior to the World Youth Chess Championship, Annie's list of accomplishments was already lengthy and impressive. At 11, she became the youngest female chess master in the country, breaking a fine record that had been held by seven-time U.S. Women's Champion Irina Krush since 1996. Less than a year later, she took home both the gold medal at the 2014 North American Youth Chess Championship U18 Girls and the official Women's International Master title. At 13, Annie was one of the youngest players to be invited to play in the highly coveted U.S. Women's Chess Championship.

Over the years, young Annie worked with several coaches including WIM Sarah Lu, IM Ben Deng, GM Varuzhan Akobian, IM Wenliang Li and currently, with GM Melikset Khachiyanyan. "She is super motivated and a winner by birth," described coach Melik, "She always wants to be first. It is very hard to break her spirit."

Apart from chess, Annie is also competitive in both sports and music. At her high school, she is on the cross-country team and finds the long distance run quite cathartic. She told me, "After the run, you feel really relaxed." Perhaps most people wouldn't use the word "relaxing" to describe a 5-mile run but we all know that someone who becomes World Champion does not abide by conventional wisdom anyway. Engaging in an active sport is often the counterbalance to the sedentary lifestyle of a chess player. When the body works, the mind rests.

In addition to using cross-country as way of taking her mind off of chess, Annie often plays the piano at home. In fact, her devotion to piano preceded that of the royal game itself. Annie started learning notes and keys at the age of four and has long since passed all ten levels of foundational piano tests. She enjoys the classical composers such as Mozart, Beethoven and Chopin. In Annie's words, "I don't really participate in piano competitions like I do with chess. I play it simply because it sounds nice."

And when there is no chess tournament, no cross-country meet or piano practice, Annie slips out of the house and hops on the nearest roller coaster for an adventure. Though admittedly somewhat scared, she loves the adrenaline rush more. That probably explains why she self-described her chess style as an "attacker".

At the end of the day, chess is still at the center of Annie's attention. She's found that skills developed from chess have permeated into many other aspects of her life. Because of her incredible ability to focus and concentrate, she has a much easier time in paying attention to the school teachers despite sitting at the back of the classroom. The problem-solving mindset also helps her with logic-oriented tasks such as following the proof of a theory in geometry. Chess has also turned Annie into a perfectionist, "Everything I do has to be perfect. The letters in my writing have to be straight, for example. It's like in chess when I spend 25 minutes to find the best move even though there are many decent candidate moves."

For now, Annie will continue to play chess out of a love for the game. Her near-term goal is to become a WGM but otherwise, she's happy to use chess as an excuse to travel the world. With her fighting spirit, Annie Wang is determined to put her best foot forward and see what happens. "I

WIM Yuanling Yuan has been the top female chess player in Canada since 2008. She has represented Canada at the Women's World Championship and has led the Canadian women's team on top boards at four Olympiads to date. In 2016, Yuanling graduated from Yale University with a B.A. in Economics. In addition to chess, Yuanling is passionate about entrepreneurship and empowering girls around the world.

never really thought about becoming a master or World Champion. It just kind of happened."

Finally, some words of wisdom from Annie to other chess girls out there:

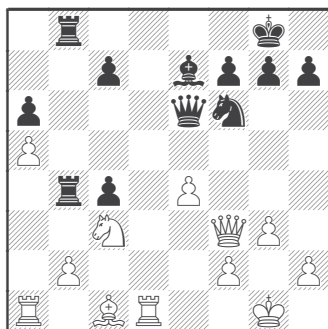
"Keep correcting your mistakes and never give up playing. It will be useful later on. Don't get intimidated by losses. You just have to believe in yourself. It doesn't really matter if you're the only girl in the tournament hall because you're going to beat them anyway." – WIM Annie Wang.

It was round 7 of the World Youth Chess Championship and Annie was comfortably in the lead with 5/6. Her next opponent was not an easy one – a young talent from China. Of all her games at the World Youth, Annie was most proud of this one because, “I controlled the whole game really well. I didn’t give her any chances. It was a nice, clear win.”

E05

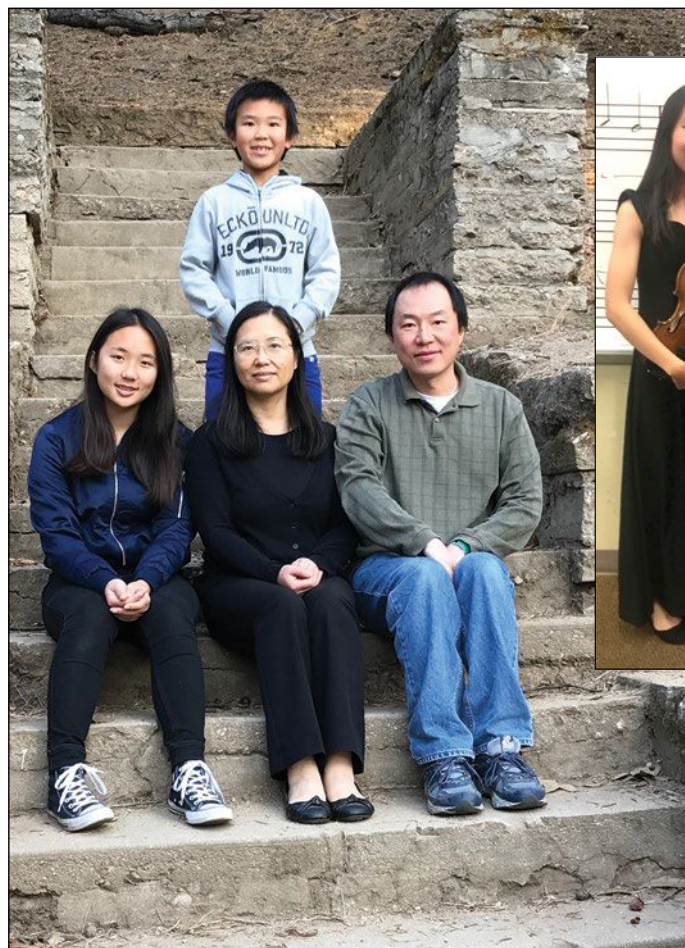
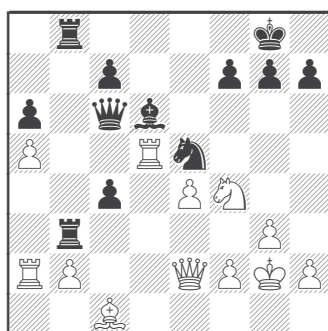
Yijing Yang	2043
Annie Wang	2090

World Youth Championship U16
Montevideo 2017



Annie has emerged from the opening with several slight advantages: an extra pawn (though doubled), control of the b-file, and active pieces. White on the other hand, struggles to develop the bishop on c1 and the rook on a1. White also has too many weak pawns that are vulnerable to attack: e4, b2, a4.

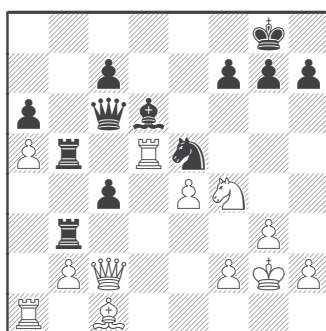
20.♔g2 ♕d6 21.♖a2 ♘g4 With the idea of maneuvering the knight to e5-d3, putting further pressure on the b2 pawn. 22.♞e2 ♘e5 23.♘d5 White had to launch some kind of counterattack but after 23.f4? ♘d3 the b-pawn falls. 23...♞b3 24.♘f4 ♞e8 25.♞d5 ♞c6



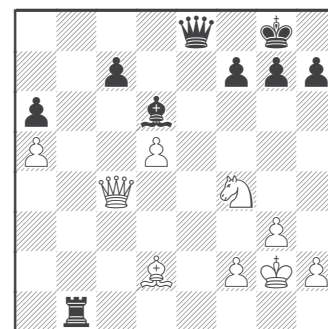
▲ Annie Wang with a friend.

▼ Annie Wang and her family.

26.♞a1 26.♙e3 would have been a better attempt to hold the position. Then 26...♞e8 (26...♞b7 27.♙d4 and everything is perfectly protected.) 27.♞d4 (after 27.♙d4? ♘g6! White is in trouble as she cannot protect both the knight on f4 and the rook on d5, e.g. 28.♘xg6 ♞xd5 29.exd5 ♞xe2+) 27...♘d3 28.♘xd3 cxd3 29.♞g4. 26...♞8b5 27.♞c2? 27.♞xb5 is better when play might continue 27...♞xb5 28.h3 f5 29.♘d5 fxe4 30.♘c3 e3+ 31.f3 ♞b8 32.♙xe3 ♘d3 33.♞b1.



27...♘d3! 28.♔g1 White is already lost as there are too many threats for her to handle, e.g. 28.♘xd3 ♞xd5 29.exd5 ♞xd5+ 30.♔g1 cxd3+; while 28.♞d4 is also no use because of 28...♙e1+ winning. 28...♘b4 29.♞e2 ♘xd5 30.exd5 ♞d7 31.♞xc4 ♞e8 32.♙d2 ♞xb2 33.♞e1 ♞b1 34.♞xb1 ♞xb1+ 35.♔g2

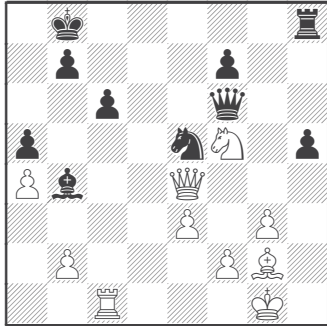


35...♞b5 36.♞e4 ♞f1+ 37.♔f3 ♞h1+ 38.♔e3 ♙c5+ and **White resigned** as there is no way to prevent the loss of the queen.

D17

Annie Wang	2090
Gabriela Antova	2256

World Youth Championship U16,
Montevideo 2017



It's now round 8 at the World Youth and Annie is paired against one of the top seeds of the tournament, Gabriela Antova of Bulgaria. Though Annie was in the clear lead with 7½/8, she was not willing to relax until the tournament was over.

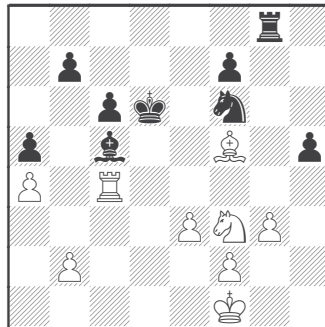
25.♖d1 It's an equal position with chances for both sides.

25...♟g6 With the intention of ...h5-h4.

26.♖d7 ♜c8 27.♖d4 ♜c7 28.♟h4 ♟e5 29.♟f3 ♟g4 Black could have easily settled for a draw here by 29...♟g6 but with the 150+ rating difference, there

was pressure to play for the win.

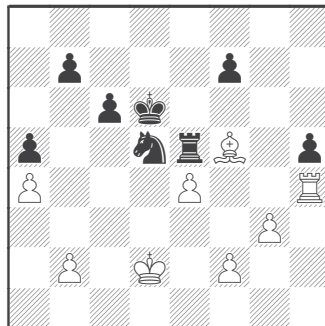
30.♟h3 ♖g8 31.♞f4+ ♟d6 32.♞xf6 ♟xf6 33.♟f5 ♟c5 34.♖c4 ♟d6 35.♟f1



35...♟d5? Better is 35...♟b6 36.♖f4 ♟d5 37.♖e4 ♟f6=.

36.♟e2 36.e4 would have been a bit better as ...♟d5 has allowed Annie a few tempi: 36...♟e7 37.e5+ ♟d5 38.♖f4 ♟xf5 39.♖xf5 ♟e6 40.♖xh5±.

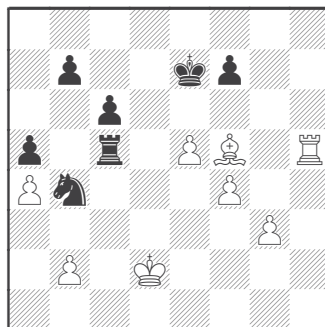
36...♖e8 37.♟d2 ♟b4 38.♖h4 ♟xd2 39.♟xd2 ♖e5 40.e4



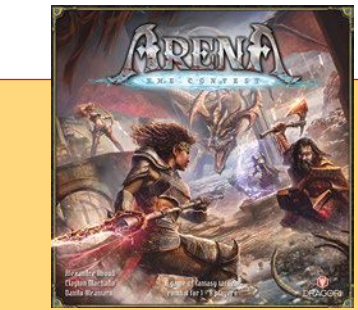
40...♟b4? Another small mistake. Correct is 40...♟f6, holding on to the kingside, then 41.♟d3 ♖e8 42.f4 ♖d8 43.e5+ ♟e7+ 44.♟e2 ♟e8 45.♖xh5 ♟g7 46.♖g5 ♟xf5 47.♖xf5 ♖d4=.

41.f4 Annie seizes the opportunity.

41...♖c5 42.e5+ ♟e7 43.♖xh5



White's kingside passed pawns have



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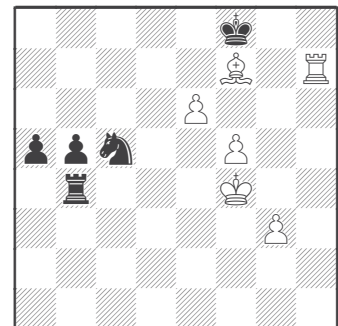
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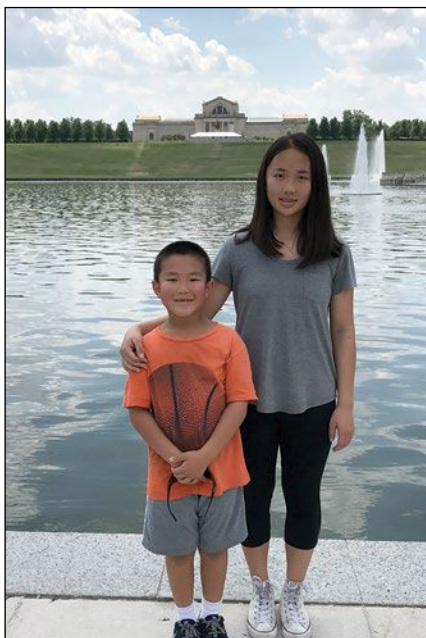
a clear path ahead. Black's queenside advance is too slow in comparison

43...♖d5+ 44.♟e2 ♟a6 45.♟b1 ♖d4 46.♖h7 ♖b4 47.♟g6 ♖xb2+ 48.♟f3 ♟c5 49.♟xf7 ♟f8 50.e6 b5 51.axb5 cxb5 52.f5 ♖b3+ 53.♟f4 ♖b4+



54.♟e5 Black cannot stop the threat of either ♟f6 and e7 mate or ♖h8+ followed by f6 mate. **Black resigned** ■

▼ Annie Wang and her brother.



UW WHITEWATER CHESS TEAM AMONG THE ELITE

Chess Warhawks

YOU CAN SMELL THE EXCITEMENT IN THE AIR. IT'S PALPABLE; THE AIR HEAVY AND THICK WITH THE HOPES AND DREAMS OF A HANDFUL OF UNIVERSITIES HOPING TO MAKE THE FINAL FOUR.



By **CHRIS WAINSCOTT**

It's the end of the college season and this is what it's all about. No, it's not March Madness. It's the Pan-Am Intercollegiate Chess Championship.

For a handful of elite colleges and universities this is the moment that they spend the better part of their year thinking about and preparing for.

It's this tournament from which the coveted spots in the President's Cup (the Final Four of collegiate chess) will be determined. Each year sees most of the same contenders as the prior year. From colleges like Webster, winner of the last handful of Pan Am's, to frequent President's Cup participants such as Texas Tech, University of Texas at Dallas (UTD), and University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV – formerly UT Brownsville). Mix in with those relative newcomers Saint Louis University (SLU) and some programs such as University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) who are looking to recapture the glory that was theirs just a short time ago and you're left with the current picture of what is typically thought of as college chess in the USA. In other words, it's the same handful of schools who are the contenders time and again.

This isn't always the case. Sometimes a team comes crashing in to the Final Four that seemed to have no shot on paper, such as the University of Illinois who managed this feat in consecutive years in 2013 and 2014 featuring only one titled player, Eric Rosen, who at the time was still a FIDE Master. However, that's not the norm.

This year featured much of the same with the usual suspects and the top four finishers being Webster, Texas Tech, SLU, and UTRGV. The President's Cup will be held from March 30 through April 1st 2018 in New York, and you will see coverage of that event in the next issue of ACM.

As a tribute to the amount of hard work they put in, Webster's B team also finished in a tie for the last spot. However, the rules state that only one team from a school can participate in the Final Four.

If all one reads is the wrap up reports that generally follow a top event such as the Pan Am's it's pretty easy to assume that this is a small event featuring only a handful of teams such as those listed above. Sure, if you read closely you might see mentioned in passing that Arizona State won the Division II title, but generally no real space is allocated to those achievements.

However, the Pan Am's is so much more than just the elite fighting over four spots. Much like the Olympics, which are currently taking place as I write this, for some teams it's enough just to be there.

The 2017 edition of the Championship featured 58 teams. They ranged in team rating from the mighty Webster A with an average rating of 2724.3, down to the modest Alaska Pacific, sporting an average rating of 962.

INTERVIEW WITH ANDREW SCHLEY

» As I looked through the standings and heard stories about what was going on at the top I found myself wondering over and over what was it that really makes the Pan Am's what they are?

I took advantage of the opportunity to speak with Andrew Schley, a Senior who attends the University of Whitewater in Wisconsin. Whitewater is a smaller university located about an hour outside of Milwaukee.

Andrew is a member of the chess team at Whitewater. While the chess club is an official club of the university it is not listed as a club sport, meaning that the team receives no funding from the school to help offset the cost of the tournament. In other words, this is a team that is playing truly for the love of the game.

This year their team consisted of Brady Harder (2192), Evan Seghers (1969), Andrew Schley (1649), and Alexander Veit (1526) for an average rating of 1834.

When all was said and done, they finished in 33rd place after being seeded 43rd to start. Brady Harder, who held down board one for them, finished with 4½/6 and became Wisconsin's newest Master. By any reasonable measure this was a success for their team.

What prompts a team like Whitewater to participate in an event such as the Pan-Am's? Is it a team decision? An individual one that is then pitched to others?

I'm not sure what prompts other teams but in the case of UW Whitewater it was an individual pitching the idea to others. I personally attended the 2010 Pan-Am's, which were held in Milwaukee. I was playing in a side section, but I also found myself spending a lot of time watching the main collegiate event. When UW Whitewater had some strong players start attending I brought up the idea of participating in the Pan-Am's.

» Clearly only a handful of schools are actually competing for the four spots in the President's Cup, so what defines a successful event for you?

Although I thought we had a pretty good team for a small non-scholarship school we were very realistic about probably not going to the President's Cup. So for our first year of actually competing at the Pan-Am's we set two goals for ourselves. One, placing higher than where we ranked among all the other teams; and two, trying to win the D III National Championship. We did place higher than we originally ranked, but unfortunately ended fourth in a four way tie for the D III championship.

» Does the school support the team financially to assist in funding the trip?

This year our university did not financially assist the trip but Evan and I have managed to successfully get the chess club listed as a sports club, which will assist in funding for future events.

» How much match strategy is there for your team? Do you put together any sort of game plan, or do you just focus on the individual games within the matches?

We went with the strongest players at the higher boards. We tried to focus on our individual games but after very long matches and a very long week if



we could win the match with a draw, we would offer it. I even caught myself offering draws when I was ahead a pawn or two to just secure team wins.

» What is your biggest takeaway from the games?

I think the biggest takeaway from the games for me is that collegiate chess is growing in a positive fashion and I would like to assist in any way possible. It is great to see more team chess events out there. It is even greater that the collegiate chess committee is giving college players more opportunities to continue their scholastic chess careers.

» Whitewater had a very successful tournament. What would you like to say about that?

I am very proud to be a part of the first team to have competed at the Pan-Am's. I know the goal was to win a national championship but after seeing the tough competition from all over North America I think we can hold our heads high with tying for first. I just wish I could have played in more collegiate tournaments before I graduated. But I have faith in my teammates that they will continue to

grow the program and have many more successful Pan-Am tournaments.

» Have you participated in any of the college tournaments other than Pan-Am's?

I have unfortunately not participated in any other college chess tournaments. I am glad the college chess scene is growing but it is also one of US Chess' best kept secrets.

» Thanks for taking the time to talk with me about the UW Whitewater program. I wish your team success in the future!

I can say for myself, having spoken not only with Andrew, but with a few members of some of the other teams from non-scholarship schools that collegiate chess is definitely on the rise in the USA. I only hope that while the elite teams are likely to remain elite for the foreseeable future, perhaps we are not far off from a time when many more of the smaller schools will begin offering at least partial chess scholarships.

When that day comes, all chess players can count that as a victory. If chess helps more kids to further their education then it's a fair bet that the chess fan base will continue to grow in this country.

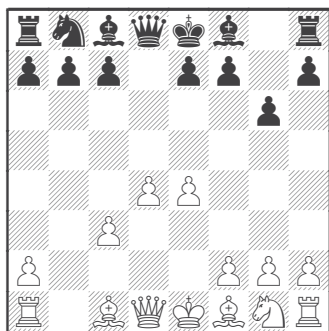
Anti-Grunfeld

By FM DENNIS MONOKROUSSOS

THE AMOUNT OF THEORY ON THE EXCHANGE GRUNFELD IS COLOSSAL. BUT LET'S SAY YOU'LL HAVE THE WHITE PIECES AGAINST A GRUNFELD SPECIALIST, AND WANT TO AVOID ALL TYPICAL SETUPS. HERE ARE SOME POSSIBLE PATHS...



Here's a familiar position, arising after the moves **1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3**

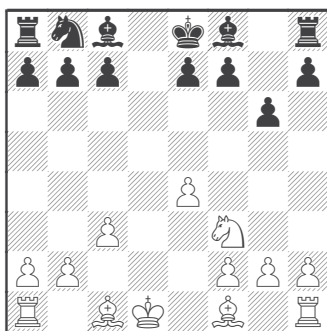


White can use various setups here – ♗e3 + ♔d2, ♗c4 + ♗e2, and ♗f3 with ♗e2 and ♖b1 the most common – and the usual procedure is to secure the big center long enough to build a winning kingside attack. Black, by contrast, will put as much pressure on the center as possible. One bishop goes to g7, the other (when possible) goes to g4, a knight comes to c6, sometimes a rook to d8 – it's an all-out war on White's center, especially the d4-pawn. Sometimes White's plan succeeds, and sometimes Black's does. The amount of theory on this, the Exchange Grunfeld, is colossal. Let's say you'll have the white pieces

against a Grunfeld specialist, and want to avoid all this.

Pseudo-Grunfeld – Andersson Games

Here's an interesting possibility: **1.♗f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3** From a Grunfeld player's perspective, White threatens to play 4.e4, when it's a King's Indian. Black must play **3...d5** to remain in Grunfeld territory, and now **4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3** ensues. After 6.bxc3 transposition to a proper Grunfeld is very likely – 6...♗g7 7.d4 would do the trick – but here we can throw Black a curve with **6.dxc3**. White is capturing away from the center and forfeiting castling rights after the obvious (and correct) **6...♖xd1+ 7.♔xd1** – and for what?

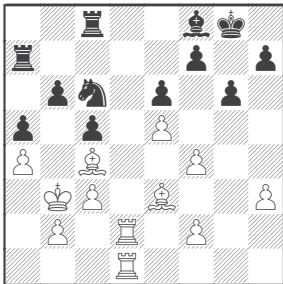


I first came across this position in the early 1980s, in a little pamphlet by Indian IM Vaidyanathan Ravikumar on Swedish GM Ulf Andersson, then one of the very best players in the world. Andersson enjoyed quite a bit of success with this line, and I also recall American GM Edmar Mednis discussing one of Andersson's wins with this system, probably in *Chess Life*.

White is slightly better, because his bishops work very well with the central pawn structure, while Black's do not. White can develop the bishops to c4 and f4, or c4 and e3, but what will Black do? If the bishop goes to g7, it's biting on the pawn on c3. If he plays ...e6, then the other bishop has nothing to do except on b7, but White will play ♗d2 and f3, neutralizing it. If Black instead plays ...f6 and ...e5, the light-squared bishop could go to e6 – but White will have played ♗c4 already. Nor will ...♗c5 be easily achieved, as White can play b4 to prevent it. As for White's only apparent drawback, the king, it will be fine on c2, as the c-pawn prevents harassment by knights or by a rook on the c-file, while the b1-h7 diagonal is closed to Black's bishop. Of course, it's still only a small advantage, but White's position

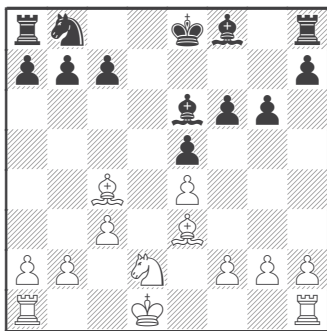
is very easy to play, it's safe, and it's not the sort of sharp and imbalanced mess Grunfeld players enjoy. Let's have a look at some examples by the Maestro himself:

7...f6 7...c5?! 8.♖e3 b6 9.a4± Black has no play, a very bad dark-squared bishop, less central control, and potential holes all over his queenside. Andersson wins convincingly, demonstrating the technical skill that put him in the world's super-elite in the '70s and '80s: 9...♖c6 10.♖b5 ♖d7 11.♖c2 ♖g7 12.♖hd1 a6 13.♖c4 ♖g4 14.h3 ♖xf3 15.gxf3 0-0 16.f4 ♖a7 17.e5 a5 18.♖d2 e6 19.♖ad1 ♖c8 20.♖b3 ♖f8

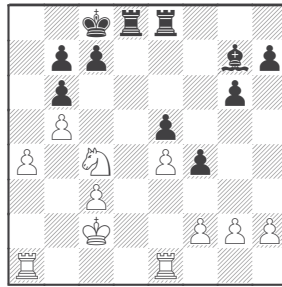


21.♖b5 ♖cc7 22.♖xc6 ♖xc6 23.♖c4 ♖e7 24.♖d7 ♖cc7 25.♖xc7 ♖xc7 26.♖b5 ♖c8 27.♖d7 ♖f8 28.♖xb6 ♖e8 29.♖b7 ♖d8+ 30.♖b5 c4 31.♖c5 1-0 U.Andersson 2560 - M.Tempone, Buenos Aires 1979.

8.♖e3 e5 9.♖d2! ♖e6 10.♖c4

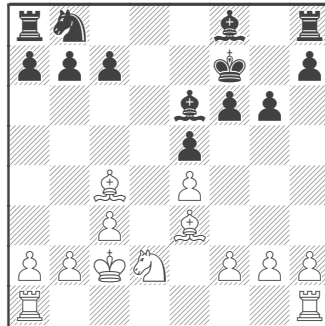


10...♖f7 10...♖xc4 11.♖xc4 ♖d7 12.b4! Preventing ...♖c5. 12...♖b6 13.♖a5!± 0-0-0+ 14.♖c2 ♖e7 15.a3 (♖15.a4) 15...f5 16.♖xb6 (16.f3) 16...axb6 17.♖c4 White's exchanging idea works well, but this in part because Black plays too conservatively. Keeping the position quiet, as Black does, favors the knight. 17...♖f6 (17...fxc4!±; 17...♖g5!?) 18.a4! ♖g7 19.♖he1 ♖he8 20.b5 f4? (20...fxc4)

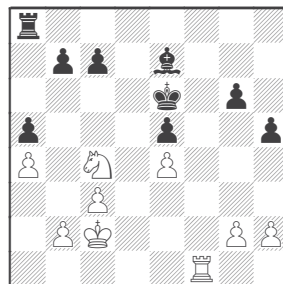


After this Black's position is strategically hopeless, and it's not surprising that Andersson gradually reels in the full point. 21.a5! bxa5 was U.Andersson 2560 - Z. Franco Ocampos 2360, Buenos Aires 1979. Andersson played the natural 22.♖xa5 and ground out the win, but 22.b6!+- was even better.

11.♖c2



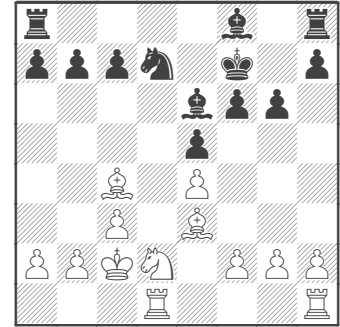
11...♖d7 11...♖e7 followed by ...♖d8 has been tried in a few games, most notably Topalov - Giri from the 2015 Sinquefeld Cup. White retains an edge, but Giri shows that with strong technique such positions can be held. 12.♖ad1 (12.♖hd1; 12.♖hf1!?) 12...♖d8 13.♖xe6+ ♖xe6 14.♖c4 (14.g4!) 14...♖xd1 15.♖xd1 ♖c6 16.a4 a5 17.f4 By now too many exchanges have occurred for this attempt at active play to succeed. 17...h5 18.♖f1 exf4 19.♖xf4 ♖e5 20.♖xe5 fxe5



As in Andersson - Franco, White has the good knight vs. the mediocre-to-bad bishop, but Black has everything covered and there are no meaningful weaknesses

in his camp. The position is equal, though only White can hope for an advantage. In the game, Giri held with ease. V.Topalov 2816 - A.Giri 2793, Saint Louis 2015.

12.♖ad1 12.♖hd1 seems a more logical choice, unless White goes for an f4 plan.



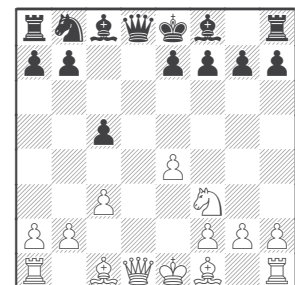
12...a5?! 12...♖c5 hasn't been played, probably because players have been afraid of 13.♖b3. Indeed, all the captures are bad, but after 13...♖d6! White's knight is misplaced on b3. Still, White is slightly better.

Here White should have preferred the more dynamic 13.f4!±, with an advantage.

Andersson instead played 13.a4 and although he achieved his favorite ending, a static contest between a mobile knight and a potentially bad bishop, after the further moves 13...♖c5 14.♖xc5 ♖xc5 15.f3 c6 16.♖xe6+ ♖xe6= it turned out the bishop wasn't such a problem after all. Andersson eventually managed to get his opponent to crack, but at this point Black is doing fine. U.Andersson 2571 - U.Atakisi 2393, Budva 2009.

Symmetrical English

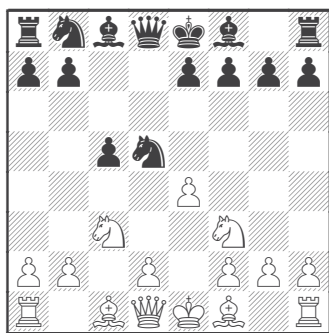
Black can be more clever, however, and vary like this: 1.♖f3 ♖f6 2.c4 c5 It's not obvious why this is clever, because 3.♖c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♖xd5 5.e4 ♖xc3 6.dxc3 is also very pleasant for White.



Yes, Black hasn't committed to ...g6, but playing ...c5 has its own drawbacks. For one thing, Black's bishop can no longer hope to reach ...c5; for another, it weakens some squares. Black can cover d5 with ...e6 and b5 with ...a6, but those in turn weaken d6 and b6, respectively. White's results here have been excellent, so you might wonder why 2...c5 is a clever choice. The answer is that Black doesn't have to play 5...dxc3 - and shouldn't - but usually plays 5...b4! After 6.♗c4 ♖d3+ 7.♗e2 ♖f4+ 8.♗f1 ♖e6 (or even a return trip with 8...♖d3) the sort of messy, tactical, non-traditional position beloved of your typical Grunfeld player appears on the board. This isn't what we want to see when we're operating in Ulf Andersson mode; what do we do? We'll answer that soon, but first let's have a look at some examples showing how well this line works for White when Black plays 5...dxc3.

Symmetrical English – 5.e4

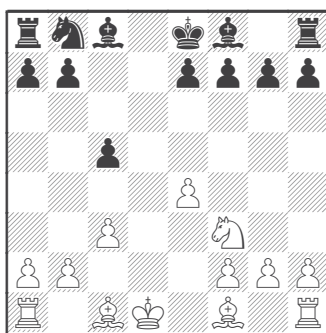
1.♖f3 ♖f6 2.c4 c5 3.♖c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♖xd5 5.e4



5...dxc3?! 5...b4! is the fly in the ointment, though White can of course play for all results here. 6.♗c4 is the main move, leading to great complications, while other moves like 6.♗b5+ and 6.d4 are playable but not particularly promising. 6.♗c4 ♖d3+ 7.♗e2 ♖f4+ 8.♗f1 and it's a mess after 8...♖e6 (or even 8...♖d3, though the move can be used to invite a short draw – and, unsurprisingly, has been.)

6.dxc3! 6.bxc3 g6 7.d4 is a main line Grunfeld.

6...♗xd1+ 7.♗xd1

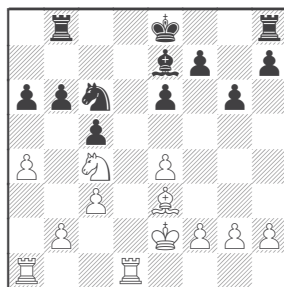


This is wonderful for White, who benefits from the black pawn on c5. (Recall the Andersson-Tempone game, given above.)

7...dxc6

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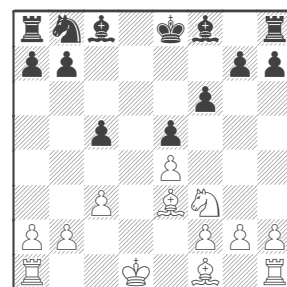
7...g6 transposes to Andersson-Tempone. However, Tempone is far from the only victim – here's an impressive win by one of the world's top grandmasters, back when he was just a teenager. 8.♗e3 b6 9.♗c4 (♖9.a4±) 9...e6 10.♗e2 ♗b7 (♖10...a6) 11.♗b5+ ♗c6 12.a4!± a6 13.♗xc6+ ♖xc6 14.♖d2 ♗e7 15.♖c4 ♗b8 16.♗hd1



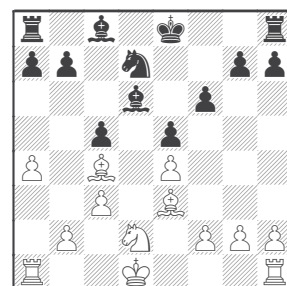
16...0-0?! 17.♗d7 b5 18.axb5 axb5

19.♖a5 ♖xa5 20.♗xa5 ♗d8 21.♗aa7 b4 22.♗h6 bxc3 23.bxc3 1-0 I.Nepomniachtchi 2602 - D.Baramidze 2543, Dresden 2007. One would expect a massacre like this in a grandmaster vs. amateur game, but Baramidze is himself a good grandmaster. Black's life is not easy in this variation – it doesn't take much for him to go astray and wind up in a prospectless position.

7...f6 8.♗e3 e5



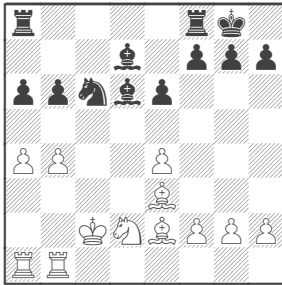
...looks maximally ugly, creating a hole on d5 and putting an end to Black's dark-squared bishop's prospects. Surprisingly, this has been played by some fine players, including Kamsky and Vaganian (as grandmasters), and by the then-future GM Arkell. Unsurprisingly, Black's score here isn't good at all. 9.♗c4 (9.♖d2 ♗e6 10.♗c4 ♗xc4 11.♖xc4 ♖c6 12.a4 ♗f7 13.♗e2± (♖13.♗c2) was already much better for White in the high-level game: J.Timman 2630 - G.Kamsky 2595, Paris 1991 (rapid).) 9...♖d7 10.♖d2 ♗d6 11.a4±



Seirawan learned his lesson against Benko! (See below.) Now he's going to be the one inflicting pain. Y.Seirawan 2555 - K.Arkell 2230, London 1981.

8.♗c2 8.♗e3± is also good. Here's a brutal example at the hands of one of the world's oldest living grandmasters: 8...e6 9.♗c2 b6 10.♗b5 ♗d7 11.a4 a6 12.♗e2± ♗d6 13.♖d2 ♖a5 14.♗hb1 0-0 15.b4

cx b4 16. cx b4 ♖c6

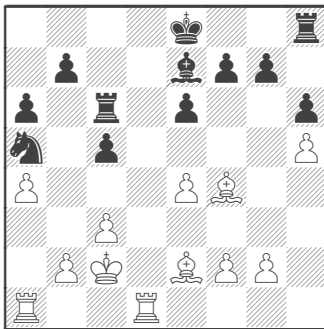


17. b5 axb5 18. axb5+- Black was unable to keep everything together on the queenside in P. Benko 2485 - Y. Seirawan 2400, Lone Pine 1978.

8... ♔d7 White has a great score here: six wins, four draws, no losses. Here's a high-level example.

9. a4 e6 10. ♔f4 ♔e7 11. ♔e2 h6 12. h4 ♖c8 13. ♖hd1 a6 14. h5± White is better in every sector of the board.

14... ♖a5 15. ♗e5 ♔c6 16. ♖xc6 ♖xc6?



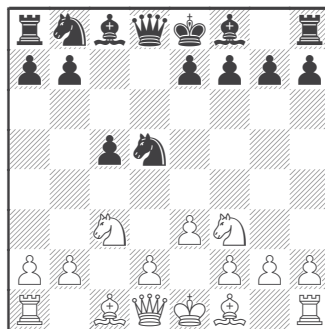
17. ♗b5! axb5 18. axb5 ♖c8 19. ♖xa5 The rest is mopping up. 19... c4 20. ♖a7 ♔c5 21. ♖xb7 ♔xf2 22. ♗d6 ♔h4 23. ♖f1 ♖d8 24. e5 1-0 L. Van Wely 2632 - I. Sokolov 2624, Rotterdam 1999.

Symmetrical English – 3...d5, 5.e3

1. ♖f3 ♗f6 2. c4 c5 3. ♖c3 d5 4. cxd5 ♖xd5 As we've seen, White is doing great after 5.e4 ♖xc3 6. dxc3, but 5... ♖b4 is another matter; it's crazy and completely playable for both sides. What can we do instead if we want to keep everything under control? (Or at least try to.) The answer: 5.e3



▲ Ulf Andersson, Mainz 2005.
Photo by Harald Fietz.



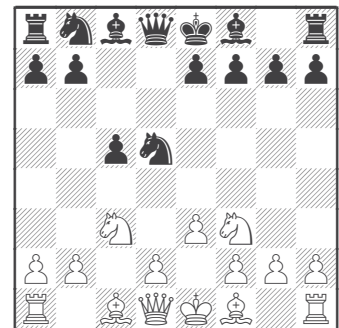
Now 5... ♖b4 is worse than useless on account of 6.d4, so it's back to 5... ♖xc3, and after 6.dxc3 ♖xd1+ 7. ♔xd1 we're back to familiar territory.

Granted, White will need to spend a tempo achieving e3-e4, but the general outlines of the middlegame are similar to what we've already seen. Andersson himself played this several times in the late 1970s, but then it disappeared until 1998, then 2004, then 2013. Finally in 2016 a couple of very strong grandmasters adopted it (Wang Yue and Gujrathi Vidit), and then it was up and running. In 2017 other elite GMs like Teimour Radjabov,

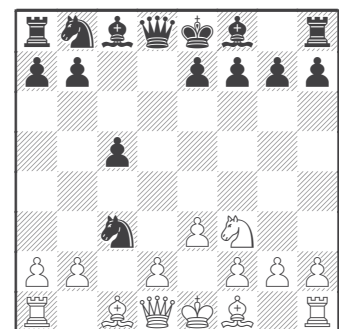
Pentala Harikrishna, and finally none other than world champion Magnus Carlsen gave it a try. Recent results paint a similar picture to what we've come to expect: in almost every case Black winds up with a slightly worse theory with no counterplay, and the results have borne this out. Only Maxime Vachier-Lagrave has found a plan that might equalize, and since Ian Nepomniachtchi had the chance to follow in his footsteps, but didn't, it's not certain that even a very strong and well-prepared player with Black is guaranteed an easy life. Let's dig in and have a look.

Symmetrical English – 3...d5, 5.e3

1. c4 c5 2. ♖c3 ♗f6 3. ♖f3 d5 4. cxd5 ♖xd5 5.e3



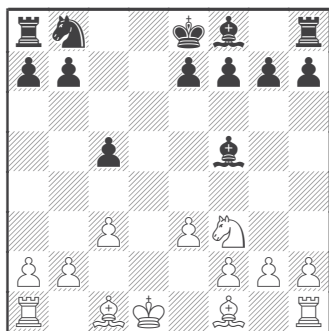
5... ♖xc3 This time, as opposed to the 5.e4 line, 5... ♖b4?! is ineffective because of 6.d4!±; Black does have other options, though, like 5...e6, 5... ♖c6, and 5...g6. All three moves are relatively unattractive, though. This can be met by 6. ♖a4+!, with an edge; 5... ♖c6 is best answered by 6. ♗b5+, possibly with a slight pull for White; and while there's nothing wrong with 5...e6 the Semi-Tarrasch (which is what results after 6.d4), it isn't a part of many players' repertoires – especially Grunfeld players.



6.dxc3 With the pawn on e3, White has some additional interesting anti-Grunfeld options here, too. One prominent recent example was 6.bxc3 g6 7.h4!? ♟g7 8.h5 ♞c6 9.♟a3!? ♟a5 10.♟h4! as played in Aronian - Nepomniachtchi from the 2017 Sinquefeld Cup. 10...♟xa3?? 11.♟a4 ♟b2 12.♟b1+- is the tactical justification of White's idea.

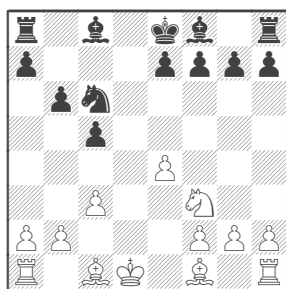
6...♟xd1+ 7.♟xd1 Now at last we come to the main line of this article. For those of you who find it suspicious that I'm labeling this an anti-Grunfeld approach, consider that eight of the nine games played in this variation over the past couple of years have been with Grunfeld fanatics playing Black: Vachier-Lagrave, Svidler, Nepomniachtchi (repeatedly), Tari, and Xiong.

7...♟f5!



This is the critical move for Black, giving him his best chance for equality. The point isn't to stop e4, because it doesn't. White will play ♞d2 and e4 on the next two moves. The reason it's a nuisance for White is that the ♟c1 has a hard time getting into the game – White's development is rendered awkward as a result.

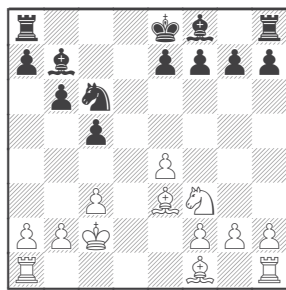
▶ **7...♞c6 8.e4 b6**



Other moves were tried in some older games, but in the last couple of years this has been the only move chosen. The

other moves don't fundamentally change things: White's broad plan remains the same; namely, some combination of ♞c2, ♟e3/f4, ♞d2, f3, a4, ♟e2/b5 and then coming up for air to see what's happening. 9.♞c2 ♟b7

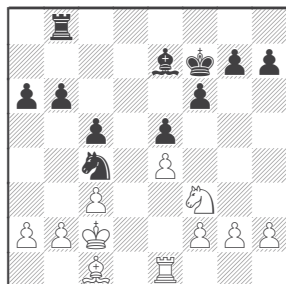
A) 10.♟e3 is a little less ambitious, but still probably sufficient for a slight plus.



10...e6 11.♞d2 ♟d6 (11...0-0-0) 12.a4 (12.f3±) 12...♟e7 (12...0-0-0) 13.f3 ♞e5 14.a5± h6 15.h4 ♟c6 16.h5 ♞d7 17.♞c4 ♟c7 18.♞a3! bxa5?! 19.♟b5± ♟xb5 20.♞xb5 ♟b6 21.♟f4! Black's position has little to commend it, especially after 22.♟g3± A.Lenderman 2565 - A.Tari 2591, Tbilisi 2017.

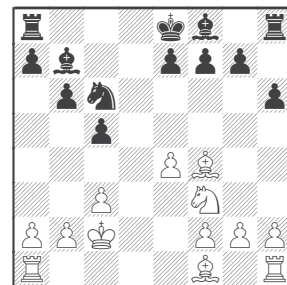
B) 10.♟f4 looks provocative, encouraging the ugly ...f6 followed by ...e5. Nepo played that way once, while in a later game he tried ...h6 and then ...g5. He drew both games, but it's hard to believe White should be unhappy in either case.

B1) 10...f6 11.♟d1 e5 12.♟c1 The idea appears on move 14, but it's not clear that this is better than the more natural 12.♟e3. (12.♟e3 ♞a5 13.♟b5+ ♞f7 14.♞d2 a6 15.♟e2±) 12...♞a5 13.♟b5+ ♞f7 14.♟he1 a6 15.♟c4+ ♞xc4 16.♟d7+ ♟e7 17.♟xb7 ♟hb8 18.♟xb8 ♟xb8=

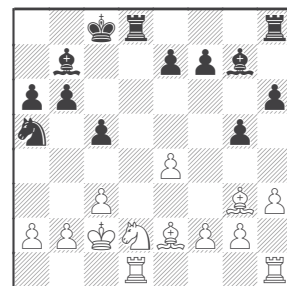


Black is fine – Black's space advantage fully compensates for the drawbacks of his bishop. S.Vidit 2669 - I.Nepomniachtchi 2740, Baku 2016.

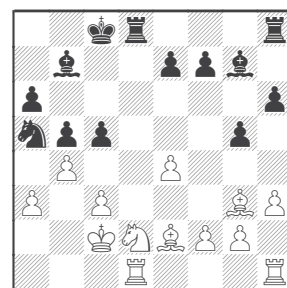
B2) 10...h6



11.♟d1 (11.h4 is a sensible alternative.) 11...g5 12.♟g3 ♟g7 13.h3 (13.♟b5! a6 14.♟e2± Now White can bother Black's queenside pawns, e.g. with some combination of a4, ♟c7, and ♞d2-c4.) 13...a6?! (♞d3...e6) Now White gets an even better version of the line just mentioned. 14.♟e2 ♞a5?! 15.♞d2 0-0-0

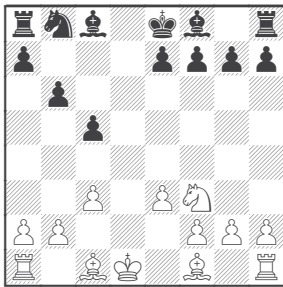


16.a3? This lets Black off the hook. 16.f3± would have left White significantly better. 16...b5 Not the best move, but Black is still better off than he was a move ago. White is still somewhat better, but most of his advantage has been lost. (16...c4! was better, with equality.) 17.b4±



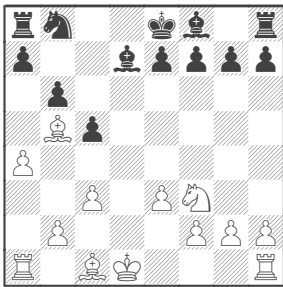
White is only slightly better P.Harikrishna 2744 - I.Nepomniachtchi 2729, Riyadh 2017.

Another move Nepomniachtchi has tried, twice, is the immediate ▶ **7... b6**. As usual, it appears that White should obtain an edge.

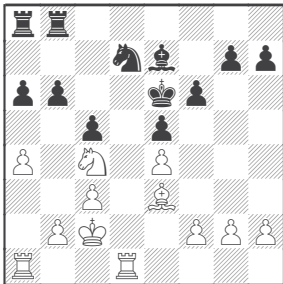


A) 8.e4 isn't as good, though White wound up with a slight edge after 8...♗b7 9.♗b5+ ♕c6 (9...♖c6 was better, but not yet a complete equalizer.) 10.a4 a6 11.♗xc6+ ♖xc6 12.♖c2 e6 13.♗d1 ♗e7 14.♗f4 ♗a7 was Wang Yue 2728 - I.Nepomniachtchi 2719, Moscow 2016, and now 15.♗e3± followed by ♖d2 looks like White's best.

B) 8.♗b5+! ♕d7 9.a4 (9.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 10.e4± may improve.)



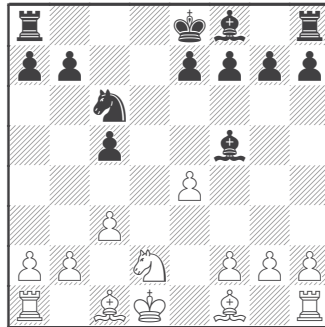
9...a6 (Also 9...♖c6 was a better choice for Black. After 9...a6, White gets a better version of the 9.♗xd7+ line.) 10.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 11.e4 e6 12.♗f4± f6 13.♖d2 ♗e7?! (13...0-0-0 The king makes sense over here: it covers c7 (no ♗c7 to worry about) and can go to b7 to cement all the queenside pawns and entry points.) 14.♖c4± ♗f7 15.♗c2 e5 16.♗hd1 ♗e6 17.♗e3 ♗hb8



18.f4! The dynamic approach, giving Black more worries than just the usual

weak light squares on the queenside. 18...exf4 19.♗xf4 ♗b7 20.♗d5 ♗aa7 21.♖d6 An inaccuracy (correct is 21.a5! b5 22.♖d6+-; or 21.♗ad1!+-) but Black's position remains miserable, and White nevertheless went on to win. V.Erdos 2624 - I.Nepomniachtchi 2733, Heraklio 2017.

8.♖d2! ♖c6 9.e4

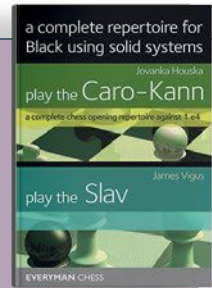


Another critical position. Against none other than Andersson himself, the late Australian/American GM Walter Browne (who first came up with 7...♗f5) chose 9...♗d7 here, a move copied in the next game to reach this position and recommended by Radjabov in his notes to his game with Svidler. Svidler played 9...♗e6, which isn't as bad as it looks but is unlikely to be repeated, while Vachier-Lagrave came up with 9...♗g6, which may be best and is definitely Black's feistiest option.

9...♗g6! More active than 9...♗d7 and 9...♗e6. The idea is to dissuade White from putting the king on its natural square c2, because of counterplay based on ...f5.

▶ 9...♗d7 10.♖c2 0-0-0

A) 11.♖b3 Andersson seems to have had a predilection for this move, which we saw in another game earlier in this article. The knight is poorly placed here, and will sooner or later retreat to d2 in search of better employment. So why play it? To force ...b6, which will soften up the light squares and create a hook for a subsequent a4-a5 advance. It's a logical plan, but it seems too slow for White to keep a meaningful edge. 11...e6 12.♗e3 b6 13.♗a6+ ♗c7= 14.a4 ♖e5 Inaccurate. (14...f5!?!; 14...♗e7) 15.f3 (15.a5!±) 15...♗d6 16.♗e2 ♗c6 17.♖d2

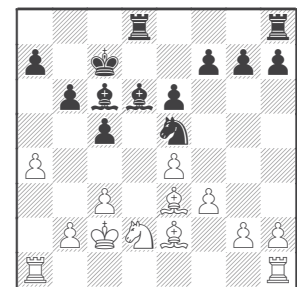


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By James Vigus and Jovanka Houska

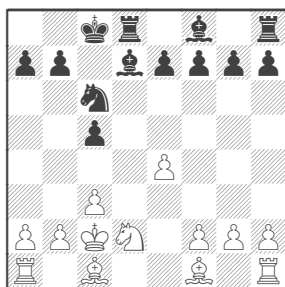
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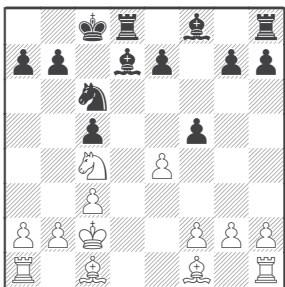
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17...f5! 18.♗b5 (18.a5±) 18...♗b7 (18...♗b7!=) 19.a5 ♗c6 20.♗xc6 (20.♗e2±) 20...♗xc6= Black is safe and enjoys full equality, but White had his chances earlier. U.Andersson 2560 - W.Browne 2540, Banja Luka 1979.

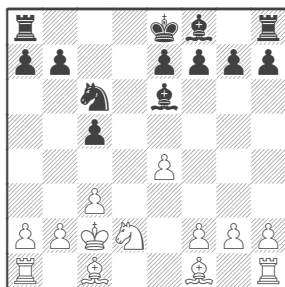


B) 11.♖c4± f5!



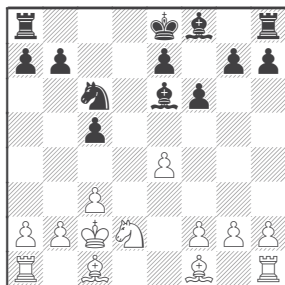
Black has hit upon a good idea, one which was later picked up, or independently discovered, by Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. The problem here is that White is under no obligation to capture the pawn. 12.♗e3 (12.♗d3 b5 13.♖d2 c4 14.♗e2 a6 15.a4 keeps a small pull. White will most likely take on b5 and follow up with b3, with a queenside initiative.) 12...e5 13.g3 (13.♗g5!? ♖e8 14.f3 is a decent alternative.) 13...♗e7 (13...fxe4!? looks ugly, but it increases the scope of the ♗d7.) 14.♗h3 g6 (14...fxe4 15.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 16.h4) G.Margvelashvili 2548 - T.Georgescu 2396, Kazan 2013. 15.♖ad1 ♗e6 16.b3±.

In *NIC Magazine* 2017/6 Radjabov gives ♗9 ...♗e6 a question mark, which seems an exaggeration. Still, as suggested earlier, I doubt the move will find many followers. 10.♖c2± with a definite advantage.

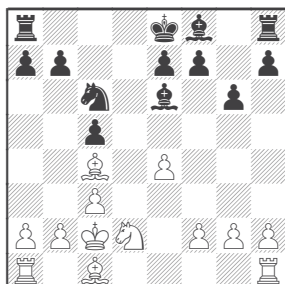


A) 10...0-0-0 11.♖b3 (11.♗c4?? ♖xd2+-; 11.♖f3!? is an interesting suggestion by Lenderman, trying to induce the move ...f6 at some point.) 11...b6 12.♗a6+ ♖b8 13.♗f4+ ♖a8 14.♖hd1 ♖xd1 15.♖xd1 g6 16.♖d2 ♗g7 17.♗c4 ♗xc4 18.♖xc4 ♖d8 19.♖d5± is suggested by Lenderman in *CB Magazine* 180.

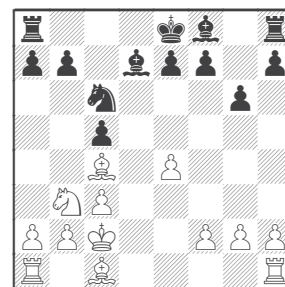
B) Radjabov notes that his computer suggests 10...f6, ironically given in the previous comment by Lenderman.



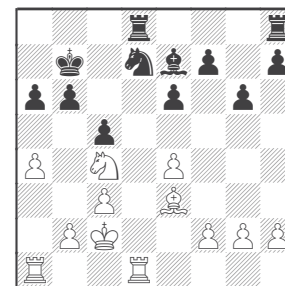
C) 10...g6 11.♗c4 (In his annotations Radjabov thinks 11.♖f3 may be best, offering the line 11...♗g7 12.♗e3 b6 13.♗b5 ♖c8 14.♖hd1 0-0 15.♗f4, aiming to continue with h4, ♗a6, and “at some point White takes the d-file”. Black’s position is tenable but “very unpleasant”.)



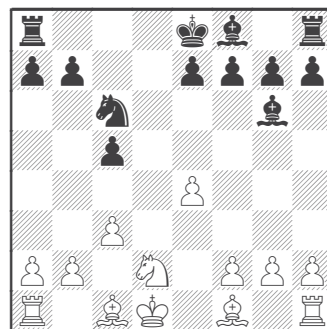
11...♗d7?! (11...♗xc4 12.♖xc4 b5 13.♖e3± favors White, who will continue with a4, but 11...♗h6! is a nice, surprising idea that works pretty well. After 12.♗e6 fxe6 13.a4 b6 14.♖c4 ♗xc1 15.♖hxc1 (Radjabov) it’s not obvious how or even if Black’s e-pawns can be shown to be weak, and the e6-pawn in particular is doing an important job controlling d5. If this reasoning is right, then 11.♗f3 should have been played.) 12.♖b3!



White’s advantage is already serious, and Radjabov wins in crushing style. (Note White’s last move, 12.♖b3, is sometimes the right move to make!) 12...b6 (12...♖e5 13.♗d5! ♗a4 14.♖b1!±) 13.a4?! (13.♗f4!) 13...♖e5?! (13...f5 14.a5 ♖e5 15.♗d5 ♖d8 16.axb6 axb6 17.♖d1 ♗b5 18.♗f4 ♗g7 is tenable for Black, according to Radjabov.) 14.♗b5 a6 15.♗xd7+ (15.♗e2!) 15...♖xd7 16.♗e3 e6 17.♖hd1± 0-0-0 18.♖d2! ♗e7 19.♖c4 ♖b7



20.a5+- White is already winning, and won quickly in T.Radjabov 2724 - P.Svidler 2749, Geneva 2017.



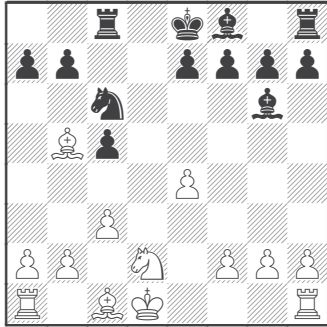
10.♗b5± 10.♖c2 0-0-0 11.f3 e6

A) Instead of MVL’s proposal, 12.♗b5 ♖c7 13.♖c4 looks like an interesting alternative, at least at first. It prevents the idea in the 12.a4 line, but Black can scrap that plan and play instead against the ♗b5 now that the ♖c4 gets in its way. 13...f6 (Now 13...♗e7? is simply bad.

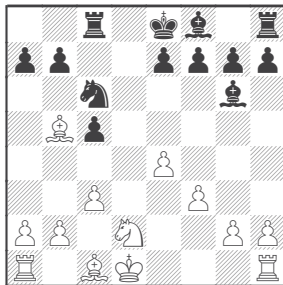
14.♔f4+ gives White a near-winning advantage.) 14.♙e3 ♙f7 15.♖ad1 ♙e7 also looks satisfactory for Black.

B) 12.a4 ♙e7 13.♘c4 f5 was Vachier-Lagrave's idea in playing 9...♙g6.

10...♙c8

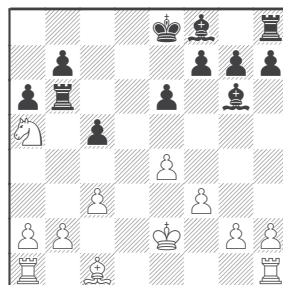


11.h4!? 11.♙e1 is the engine's suggestion, and while it's initially impressed by the move it is eventually persuaded that the position is equal. 11...e6 12.♘c4 a6 13.♙xc6+ ♖xc6 14.♙f4 f6 15.♘a5 ♖b6 16.♙c2 e5=. The immediate 11.f3!

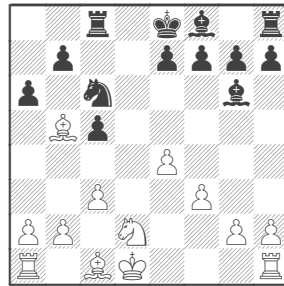


...is a more permanent way of safeguarding the e-pawn, leaving the rook free to use the d-file.

A) 11...e6 12.♘c4 a6 13.♙xc6+ ♖xc6 14.♘a5 ♖b6 (14...♖c7 15.♙f4 ♖d7+ 16.♙e2 f6 17.♖hd1 Thanks to f3. 17...e5 18.♙e3 b6 19.♘c4 ♖b7 20.a4 ♙f7 21.b3±) and now 15.♙e2!± looks good, as the pawn isn't hanging.

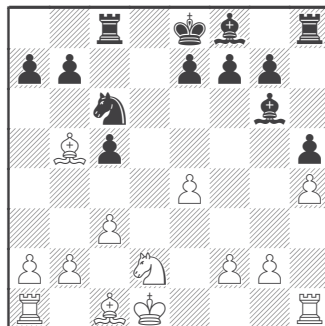


The king isn't on c2, where it has to worry about the ...♙g6, and the rook is ready to come to d1. This seems to give White an edge. Also 15.h4!? isn't bad, and I think it's better for White to play this later rather than sooner – check out the note to White's 12th move to see why. B) 11...a6! Best.



12.♙xc6+ (12.♙d3!?!; 12.♙e2!?) 12...♙xc6 13.♘c4 f6 14.a4 ♙f7 15.b3 ♙xc4! 16.bxc4 ♘d7 followed if necessary by ...♙c8. It will be hard to break Black's fortress on the queenside, but because of Black's lousy bishop White will have a permanent advantage. Against a very strong player that advantage may be only symbolic, but against mere mortals it could turn into something more impressive. 17.♖b1 (17.♙c2 e6 18.♙f4 ♙d6 19.♙g3 ♖d8 20.♖ae1 ♙xg3 21.hxg3 h6 22.e5 ♙e7=) 17...♙c8 18.♖e1 e6 19.e5 ♙e7 20.exf6 gxf6 21.♙c2 h5=. Black's coming play on the g-file is as serious as anything White has along the b- or e-files.

11...h5



12.♖e1 12.f3 is again possible, and again 12...a6 is likelier to equalize than ...e6. 13.♙xc6+ (13.♙e2!?) 13...♙xc6 14.♘c4 A) 14...f5!? 15.e5 (15.exf5 ♙xf5 16.♙f4 g6 17.♖e1 ♖e6 18.♖xe6 ♙xe6 19.♘e5 ♙f5 20.♙e2 ♙g7=) 15...♙f7 16.b3±. B) 14...f6 15.a4 ♙f7 16.b3

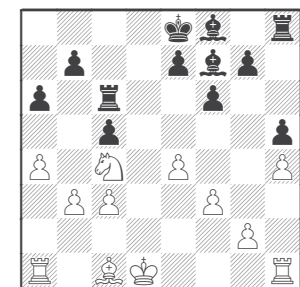


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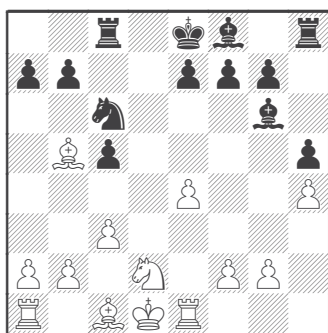
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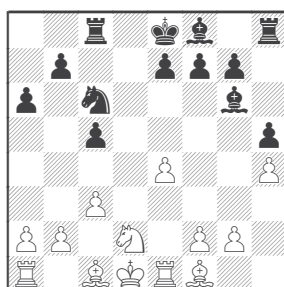
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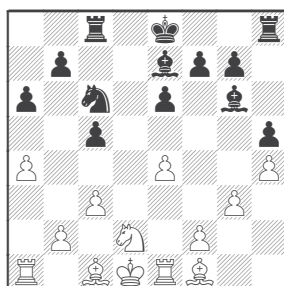
...is par for the course we've become accustomed to, but now something different, indicating that 11.h4 may sometimes help Black, too. 16...g5! gives Black excellent counterplay. The pawn can be taken, but it's no skin off Black's nose: 17.hxg5 fxg5 18.♙xg5 ♖g6 19.f4 ♙g7 20.e5 ♙h6 21.♙xh6 ♙xc4 22.bxc4 ♖hxh6 23.♖a2 ♖g3 24.♖h3 ♖xh3 25.gxh3 ♖g6=.



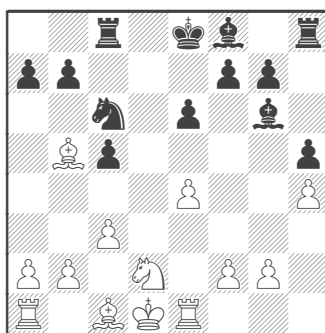
12...e6 12...a6 13.♟f1!? is the point of Carlsen's 12.♟e1.



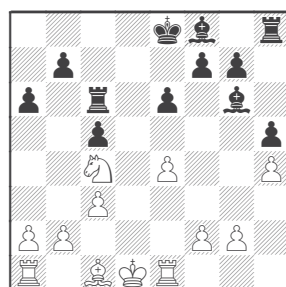
The bishop gets out of everyone's way, and now the knight can go to c4 without getting in the bishop's way when it's on b5. White is doing his best to create harmony in his position, but it's still far less than ideal. The plan with 7...♟f5 and 9...♟g6 is excellent! 13...e6 14.a4 ♟e7 15.g3 is given by Vachier-Lagrave, who thinks this is at least comparatively better for White, as ...f5 won't be so effective here. But is he right?



15...♟d8! creates more disharmony in White's position. 16.♟c2 (16.♟e2 f6=; 16.f4 e5! Surprising, ugly, and good. 17.f5 ♟h7 If White's development weren't so atrocious he'd stand better, but as it is Black will play ...g6 next, with a good position. 18.a5 g6 19.fxg6 fxg6 20.♟e2 ♟g8= followed by ...g5, with equality.) 16...f5 17.♟g2 0-0 18.f4 e5! 19.♟c4 ♟f6=.



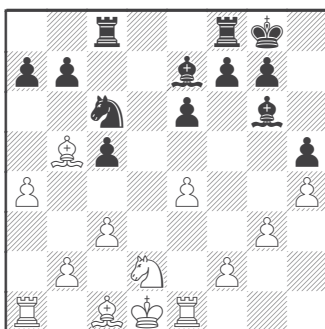
13.a4! 13.♟c4 a6 14.♟xc6+ ♟xc6 White is on the verge of having a nice advantage – he's just one tempo short of having a strong grip, which he could achieve in several ways with that extra move.



15.♟c2 (15.♟e5 ♟d6+ If only the king were already on c2! 16.♟c2 ♟h7=; 15.♟f4 ♟e7 16.♟g3 b5 17.♟e5 ♟d6+ 18.♟c2 ♟h7 19.a4 b4=) 15...f6 Too late for the knight to come to e5. 16.a4 ♟d6 17.a5 ♟c7 18.b3 0-0=.

13...♟e7 13...a6 transposes to the 12...a6 variation after 14.♟f1; here, as there, Black equalizes.

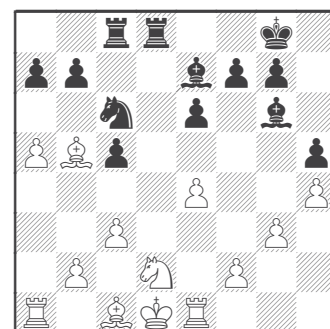
14.g3 0-0



15.a5 15.♟f1!? f5 16.♟c4 ♟f7 is given by MVL (and the computer), and both deem the position approximately equal. White still has some hopes of converting the position into one that's statically better, while Black's energetic play aims to open the board at the expense of White's

clumsy king and lagging development.

15...♟fd8 15...♟e5!= is better than the text, so if you want to play this line with Black you should choose this move. From here it's not clear what White ought to do, but f4, ♟a4, and a6 are all possible, and may in fact be played in any order. Black will meet a6 with ...b6, f4 with ...♟g4, and ♟a4 with ...♟fd8.



16.a6 16.f4!± stops ...♟e5, and helps White meet ...e5 with f5 and ...f5 with e5. In fact, White may even play f5 himself at some moment.

16...b6 17.♟c2 ♟e5 17...f5! might be even stronger; it's possible that Black has an edge here.

18.f4 ♟g4= M.Carlsen 2822 - M.Vachier-Lagrave 2791, Saint Louis 2017. The position is equal and crazy, and remained that way for a long time. On moves 39 and 40, right at the time control, Vachier-Lagrave made some mistakes that allowed Carlsen to achieve a winning advantage, but then Carlsen spoiled it with a tactical oversight. He saw two winning moves – or thought he did. One was winning, and the second, more elegant one he chose wasn't winning at all due to a serious tactical flaw. This portion of the game was covered in an earlier issue of ACM, with analysis by Shakhriyar Mamedyarov.

CONCLUSION

It's possible that Vachier-Lagrave has found Black's best response to this Ulf Andersson-inspired Anti-Grünfeld approach, but I suspect that the last word remains to be said. Even the equal position he reached remained very sharp, and the stronger player will have plenty of opportunities to outplay a lower-rated opponent or even a peer. And if Black doesn't follow in MVL's footsteps, White may well just be better, and at a minimum will enjoy a safe position that's very easy to play.



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e5xf6! HOW DRAMATIC CAN IT BE?

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by **GM MIHAIL MARIN**

W

hen speaking about chess beauty one natural question – at least for somebody living outside our chess world – is whether beauty can exist in the limited universe consisting of a 64-square board and 32 wooden, lifeless, pieces.

I will not try to give a comprehensive definition of this term here; too many bright minds have done this before. But the recent game with which I will start this article helps me to reveal one frequent aspect of chess beauty. It is about turning priorities upside down, making a simple pawn more important than one's own queen.

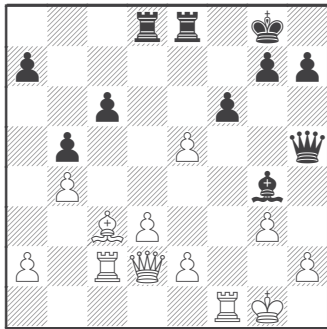
This can happen in two main cases: if the pawn goes straight to promotion or places the enemy king in mortal danger. The games examined here feature mainly the latter situation. And since things need to happen in the neighbourhood of the enemy king, e5xf6 is one of the moves that are best suited for this purpose.

Viswanathan Anand 2783

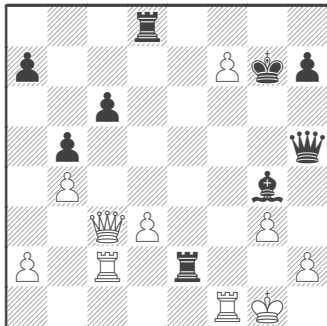
Fabiano Caruana 2807

Sinquefield Cup, St. Louis 2017

[See the entire game in ACM 04, Page 29, -Ed.]



Black obviously thought the e5-pawn would be pinned so with 21...f6 he counted on retrieving it with a normal position. But here comes the surprise... **22.exf6!!** ♖xe2 Attacking the queen and threatening mate. But things are going to happen around the other king... **23.f7+** ♔f8 **24.♗xg7+!** ♔xg7 **25.♗c3+**



25...♗e5 Caruana might have overlooked that 25...♗e5 runs into 26.♗xe2!! giving up the queen in order to allow the f7-pawn (previously e5-pawn) to become the main hero: 26...♗xc3 27.♗e8 ♗d4+ 28.♗f2 ♗xb4 29.f8♗+ ♗xf8 30.♗xf8 ♗xd3 31.♗g8+ ♔f7 32.♗ef8+ ♔e7 33.♗a8 ♗f5 34.♗xa7+ winning. **26.♗d4!** Another strong move, gaining a tempo to clear the c-file for the rook. **26...♗g5 27.♗c5! ♗xd4 28.f8♗+ ♔g6 29.♗f7+ 1-0** 29...♔h6 30.♗f6+ wins.

When I saw this game I immediately remembered one of the most spectacular

classics. “The whole game resembles an artistic creation of the highest order. The Latvian artists Juta & Mareks used the position before 19.exf6 to honor their countryman. They recreated it on a one-by-one meter palette, but they left out the black pawn on c5. In early November 2008, I discovered the piece in an art shop in Munich and immediately bought it even with the artistic mistake.” – Hecht.

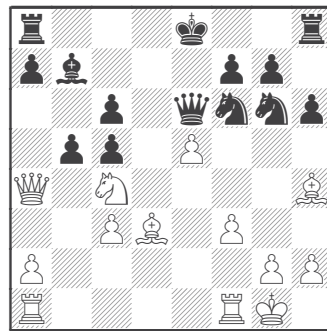
E13

Mikhail Tal

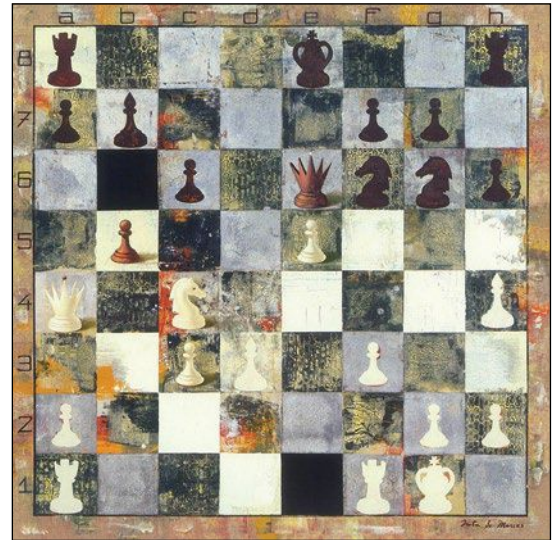
Hans Joachim Hecht

Chess Olympiad, Varna 1962

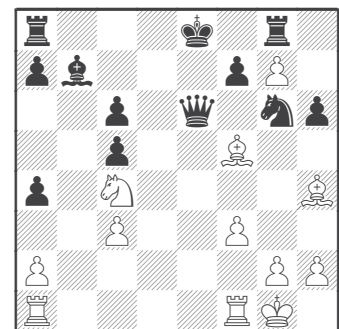
1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 b6 4.♗c3 ♗b4 5.♗g5 ♗b7 6.e3 h6 7.♗h4 ♗xc3+ 8.bxc3 d6 9.♗d2 e5 10.f3 ♗e7 11.e4 ♗bd7 12.♗d3 ♗f8 Black seems to have obtained a solid game but the following quite typical move stirs up the kind of complications in which Tal used to excel. **13.c5 dxc5 14.dxe5 ♗xe5 15.♗a4+ c6? 16.0-0 ♗g6 17.♗c4 ♗e6 18.e5 b5**



19.exf6 The same move as in the previous game, this time sacrificing the queen for good. It does not necessarily yield an advantage but it leads to very interesting play and undoubtedly shocked Tal’s opponent: “I almost fell out of my chair when I saw this reply, since I was reckoning only on 19.♗b3. But that was not all. Suddenly a large demonstration board appeared on my right and our position was being quickly set up. Sensation-seeking



spectators were rushing towards our table. In addition, Tal’s teammates were crowding around our board, making it resemble organ pipes.” Then Hecht added: “Here the temperamental Najdorf, who was watching the game, gave me a kiss. The same move, also announcing a queen sacrifice, appeared in the famous game Lilienthal – Capablanca, Hastings 1934/35, in which the young master quickly forced the former world champion to resign. Hecht made his reply without thinking,” – Tal. **19...♗xh4** (19...0-0 20.♗xg6 ♗xc4 21.♗xc4 bxc4 22.exf6 fxc6 23.fxc7 ♔xg7 24.♗f2 ♗f5) 20.♗d6+ ♔f8 21.♗xe6 fxe6 22.♗xb7 ♗d5 23.♗xc5± Marin. **19...bxa4** 19...0-0 20.♗ae1 (20.♗c2 ♗xh4 21.♗a5±) 20...♗xe1 21.♗xe1 bxa4 22.♗xg6 fxc6 23.♗e7 ♗f7 (23...g5; 23...gxf6 24.♗xb7 ♗fb8) 24.♗d6 Tal; 24...♗af8 Marin. **20.fxc7 ♗g8 21.♗f5**



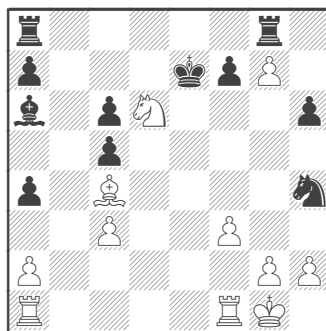
”This is where I lost it. It took me several minutes before I was able to calculate the



GM Mihail Marin, 3-time Romanian champion. Olympic third board bronze medallist in Thessaloniki 1988. Participant in 2 Interzonals and 12 Olympiads. Won the second best game prize at the Yerevan 1996 Olympiad. Second of Judit Polgar in 2005. Author or co-author of 13 books. *Learn from the Legends* was the Book of the Year at ChessCafe.com. Vol. 1 of The English Opening trilogy was voted the best opening book, *Reggio Emilia, il torneo del giubbileo* (together with Yuri Garrett) won the Alvis Zichichi Book of the Year award. Most recent book is *The Pirc Defence*. Books published in several languages: English, German, Spanish, Italian, Romanian, Russian, Mongolian.

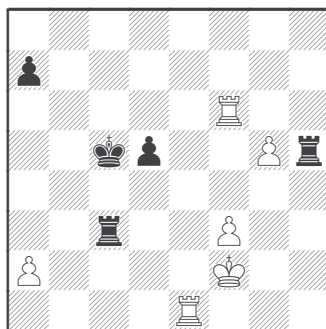
ensuing variations. Tal considered this game one of the most beautiful in the Olympiad. For me, it represents a wonderful example of harmonious coordination of the pieces. Yet I was still able to find the best defense.” – Hecht.

21...♖xh4 21...♗xc4 22.♗fe1+ ♗e6 23.♗xe6+ fxe6 24.♗xg6+ ♔d7 25.♗d1+ ♔c7 26.♗g3+ ♔b6 27.♗b1+ ♔a6 28.♗d3+ ♔a5 29.♗c7#; 21...♗xf5 22.♗d6+ ♔d7 23.♗xf5 ♗xh4 24.♗ad1+ ♔c7 25.♗xh4 ♗xg7 26.♗fe1. 22.♗xe6 ♗a6 22...fxe6 23.♗d6+ ♔e7 24.♗xb7; 22...♗xg7 23.♗h3±. 23.♗d6+ ♔e7 24.♗c4±



The complications have come to an end but Black's worries have not, as White retains a very pleasant ending, which Tal managed to convert to a win.

24...♗xg7 25.g3 ♔xd6 26.♗xa6 ♖f5 27.♗ab1 f6 28.♗fd1+ ♔e7 29.♗e1+ ♔d6 30.♔f2 c4 31.g4 ♖e7 32.♗b7 ♗ag8 33.♗xc4 ♖d5 34.♗xd5 cxd5 35.♗b4 ♗c8 36.♗xa4 ♗xc3 37.♗a6+ ♔c5 38.♗xf6 h5 39.h3 hxg4 40.hxg4 ♗h7 41.g5 ♗h5



42.♗f5 ♗c2+ 43.♔g3 ♔c4 44.♗ee5 d4 45.g6 ♗h1 46.♗c5+ ♔d3 47.♗xc2 ♔xc2 48.♔f4 ♗g1 49.♗g5 Unquestionably a beautiful piece of

work, but now we need to check the game which, by his own admission, had inspired Tal.

Black resigned

For modern players, Lilienthal is principally known for having been at a certain moment in time the oldest grandmaster alive. He passed away on May 8, 2010, three days after turning 99.

E24

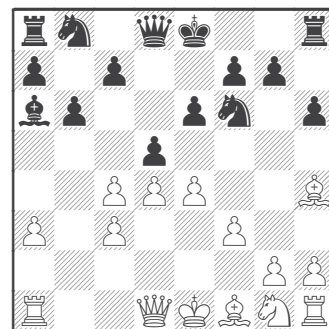
Andor Lilienthal

Jose Raul Capablanca

Hastings 1934/35

1.d4 Many of the comments below are taken from Lilienthal's autobiography *Schach war mein Leben*.

1...♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♖c3 ♗b4 4.a3 ♗xc3+ 5.bxc3 b6 6.f3 d5 7.♗g5 h6 8.♗h4 ♗a6 9.e4



Lilienthal plays the opening very aggressively, fully in accordance with his style. Against a player with such a profound feel for position as Capablanca, it may seem a risky policy, but the game shows it is best to follow one's own intuition.

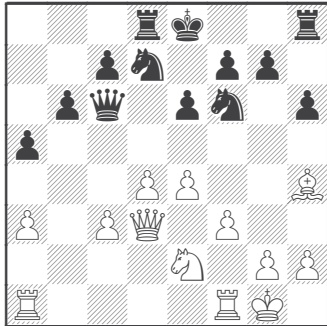
The whole variation was not new, having been introduced by none other than world champion Alexander Alekhine.

9...♗xc4 10.♗xc4 dxc4 11.♗a4+ ♗d7 12.♗xc4 ♗c6 12...♖c6 13.♖e2 ♖a5 14.♗d3 ♗c6 15.0-0 0-0-0 16.♗ab1 g5 17.♗g3 ♖h5 18.f4 (18.♗b4† Marin) 18...f6 19.♗b4 ♗hg8 20.f5 e5 21.d5 ♖xg3 22.♖xg3∞ was A.Alekhine - E.Eliskases, Hastings 1934/35.

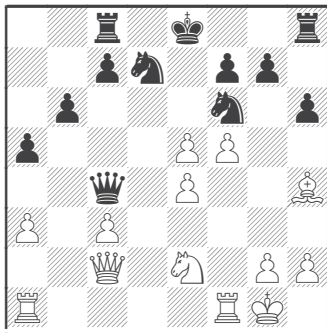
13.♗d3 ♖bd7 14.♖e2 ♗d8 14...0-0-0

Andor Lilienthal, Torino 2006. 
Photo by Harald Fietz.

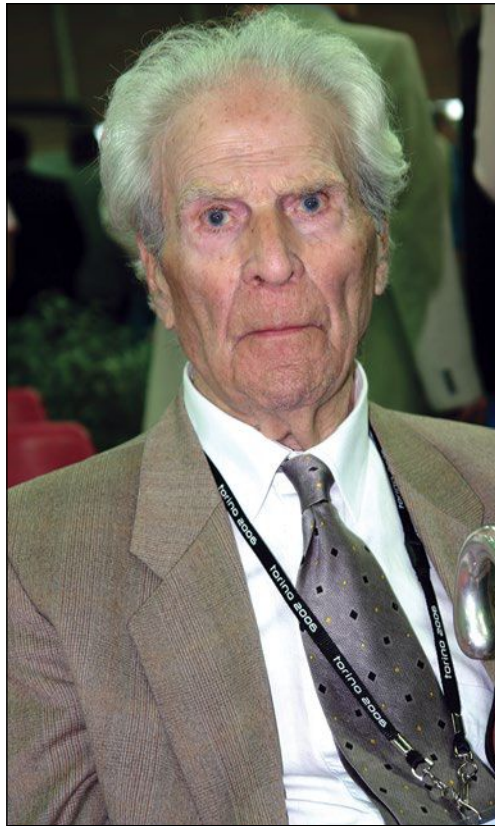
15.c4 ♖e5 16.♞c3 ♜xc4 17.♞c1 b5 18.a4
a6 19.0-0±; 14...0-0 15.c4 (15.0-0) 15...
e5 16.0-0 ♞ad8 17.♙f2±.
15.0-0 a5 15...♖e5 16.♞c2 ♜c4 17.d5!
exd5 18.♜d4.



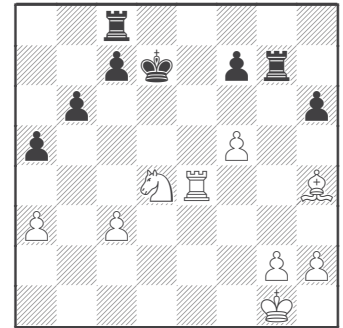
16.♞c2 16.f4?! ♜c5 17.♞c4 ♞xe4!
18.♙xf6 gxf6 19.f5 ♞d3! 20.♞xd3 ♜xd3
21.♞ab1 e5 22.♞f3 ♜f4 23.♜xf4 exf4
24.♞xf4=.
16...♞c4 17.f4 17.e5 g5 18.exf6 gxf4
19.♞fe1 ♜xf6 20.♜f4 0-0 21.♞d2 ♜h7
22.♜d3 ♜d5 23.♞ac1 ♖e7 24.♖e5 ♞d5
25.♞f4=.
17...♞c8 18.f5 e5 19.dxe5



19...♞xe4? Lilienthal writes that he is very grateful to Capablanca for making his last move. Even after many years, chess friends and amateurs had asked him again and again to show them how he sacrificed his queen against one of the greatest players in the whole of chess history. 19...♜xe5 20.♜f4 ♜fd7 21.♞ad1 0-0 22.♜d5 (intending f5-f6, ♜d5-e7+ Lilienthal.) 22...♞c5+ 23.♙h1 f6∞.

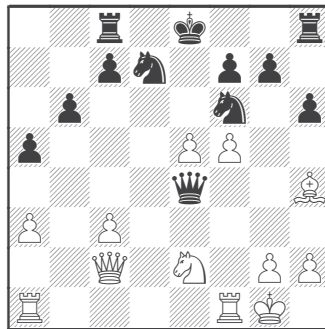


With his king in mortal danger, Capablanca has to return the queen. **22...♞e4 22...♞a4 23.♞ae1+ ♜e5** 24.♞xe5+ ♜d7 25.♞d5+ ♜e8 26.♞e1 mate; or 22...♞d2 23.♞fe1+ ♜e5 24.♞xe5+ ♜d7 25.♞d5+ ♜e8 26.♞e1+ ♞xe1+ 27.♙xe1 winning. **23.♞ae1 ♜c5 24.♞xe4+ ♜xe4** 25.♞e1 ♞xg7 26.♞xe4+ ♜d7



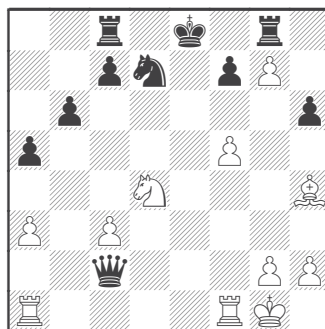
Capablanca played his last move, but then saw that after 27.♞e7+ ♜d6 28.f6 ♞h7 White wins with 29.♙g3+. “He smiled, offered me his hand and congratulated me”.

Black resigned



20.exf6! As in the previous game, this is a genuine queen sacrifice but things are pretty much forced here.

20...♞xc2 21.fxg7 ♞g8 22.♜d4



Nine years after his encounter with Hecht, Tal once again sacrificed his queen with exf6, but for some reason he did not write more than a few brief annotations to the game. True, the whole tactical plot started earlier, but the game is worth studying anyway.

B48

Mikhail Tal

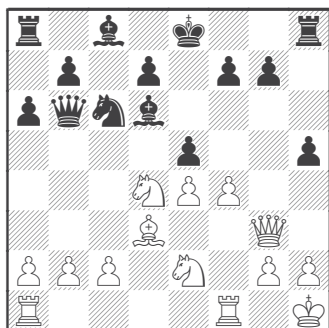
Andres Vooremaa

Tallinn 1971

1.e4 c5 2.♜f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♜xd4
a6 5.♙d3 ♜c6 6.♙e3 6.♜xc6.
6...♜f6 7.0-0 ♞c7 7...d5?! 8.exd5
♜xd5 9.♜xc6! bxc6 10.♙d4!±.
8.♜c3 8.♜d2!?
8...♙d6 9.♙h1!± h5! 10.f4 ♜g4
10...♜xd4 11.♙xd4 e5!±.
11.♞f3 11.♙g1? ♜xd4 12.♙xd4 ♙xf4
13.♞f3 ♙e3!±.
11...♜xe3 12.♞xe3 ♞b6 12...♙c5?
13.♜xe6 wins.
13.♜ce2 e5!? A risky decision. With his development incomplete, Black switches from a typical Paulsen setup to a Najdorf

scheme, commencing a struggle for the dark squares.

14. ♖g3!?



This is typical of Tal. He probably disliked the fact that upon normal moves Black would obtain chances of consolidating his position on the dark squares and then gradually equalizing, so he immediately changes the pace of play. White gets enough compensation for the piece but in some lines it is hard to prove anything more than that. On the other hand, Black faces a host of threats, some of them real and others just imaginary, but all of which make his move by move choices difficult. Alternatives are 14. ♘f5 ♗xe3 15. ♘xe3 exf4 or 14. fxe5 ♗xe5 15. c3 d6.

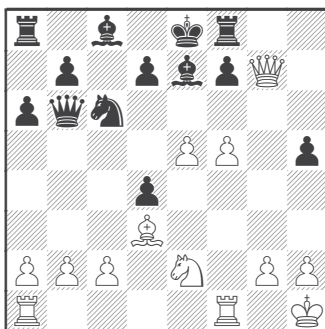
14...exd4 Given a question mark by Eduard Gufeld in his annotations

in 1971, but 14...exf4, to which he attaches an exclamation mark, in my opinion is best met by 15. ♗g5 (not 15. ♗xg7 ♗e5 16. ♗g5 ♗xd4 17. ♘xf4 ♘e7 18. ♘d5 ♗d6!∞ Gufeld) 15...g6 (15... ♘xd4 16. ♗xg7) 16. ♘xc6 ♗xc6 17. ♘xf4±.

However, 14... ♘xd4 15. fxe5 ♗c7 (15... ♗c5 16. ♗xg7 ♗f8 17. ♘f4 or 15... ♗f8 16. ♗f2 favor White, according to Gufeld.) 16. ♗xg7 ♗f8 17. ♗xf7 ♗xf7 18. ♗h8+ ♗f8 (18... ♘e7 19. ♘c3) 19. ♗xh5+ ♘d8 20. ♗g5+ ♘e8=.

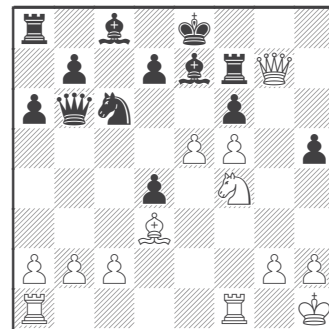
15. ♗xg7 ♗f8 16. e5 ♗e7 16... ♗c7 17. ♘g3+-.

17.f5



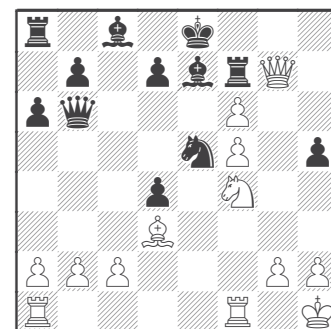
17...f6 17... ♘d8 18. ♘f4; 17... ♗xb2 18. ♘f4 ♗c3 19. ♗ae1 ♗b8 20. ♘h5; or 17...d6 18. e6 fxe6 19. f6 wins.

18. ♘f4 ♗f7 After 18... ♘xe5 19. ♗xe7+ ♘xe7 20. ♘d5+±; or 18... fxe5 19. f6 Black is fighting for his life, but the next move should have won quickly.



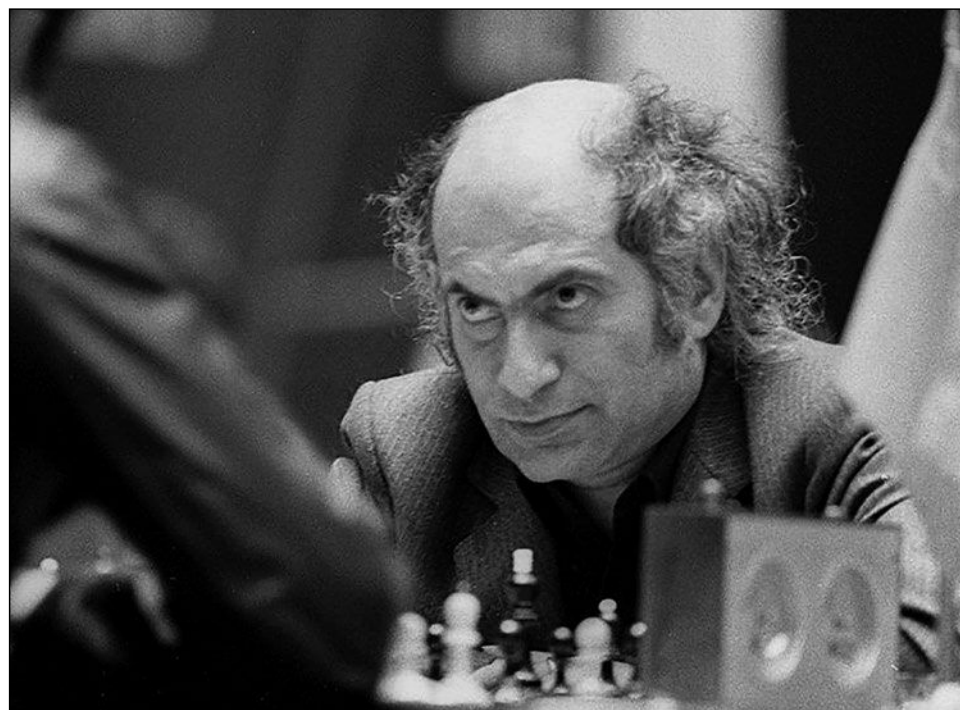
19. exf6!! A familiar theme, but this time Black cannot accept the sacrifice: 19. ♗h8+ ♗f8 20. ♗xh5+ ♘d8 21. exf6 ♗xf6±.

19... ♘e5 19... ♗xg7 20. fxg7 ♘f7 21. f6! (threatening ♗c4+) 21... ♗xf6 22. ♘h5+- Gufeld. Play might then continue 22... ♘e7 23. ♗ae1 ♘g8 24. ♗h7 ♘h6 25. ♗e8!? ♘xe8 26. ♘xf6+ ♘f7 27. g8 ♗+ ♘xg8 28. ♘d5+ ♘g7 29. ♘xb6 winning.



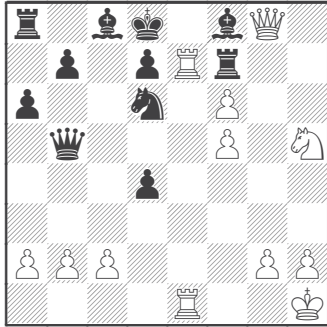
20. ♗c4?± Too much beauty sometimes throws away a win. But from the practical point of view the situation now becomes similar to that after 14. ♗g3. Winning is 20. ♗h8+ ♗f8 (20... ♗f8 21. ♗xh5+ ♘f7 22. fxe7 ♗h8 23. ♗g6 ♗xg6 24. fxg6 Marin) 21. ♗ae1 d6 22. ♗c4+- Gufeld (or 22. ♘e6+- Marin).

20... ♘xc4 21. ♗g8+ ♗f8 21... ♗f8 22. ♗xc4 threatening ♘d5 (22. f7+ ♘d8 23. ♘g6±).



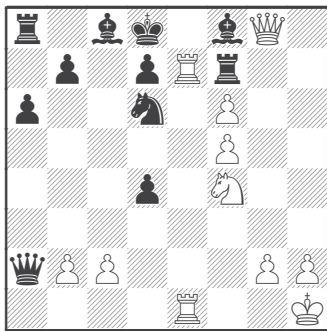
▼ Mikhail Tal, 1982. Photo by D. Donskoi.

22. ♖xh5 ♘d6 23. ♖ae1+ 23. ♖fe1+ ♘d8 24. ♖e7 ♖xb2. 23... ♘d8 24. ♖e7 ♖b5 Or 24... ♖xe7 25. fxe7+ ♘xe7 26. ♖g5+ ♘f7 27. ♖f6+ ♘g8 28. ♖g6+ ♘h8 29. ♘f6 winning. 25. ♖fe1



The position remains chaotic and the black king is just as insecure as it was before. With his next move Black returns Tal's earlier favor.

25... ♖d5?? 25... ♖a5 26. c3 (26. ♖a1!± Gufeld; then 26... ♖xe7 27. fxe7+ ♘xe7 28. ♖g5+ ♘e8) 26... ♖xa2 27. cxd4±; 25... ♖b4? 26. a3 ♖d2 27. ♖f1; 25... ♖c4 26. ♘f4 (26. b3 ♖c3 27. ♖f1) 26... ♘c7 27. ♘e6+. 26. ♘f4 Now White wins. 26... ♖xa2



27. ♘e6+! ♖xe6 27... dxe6 28. ♖xf7 ♘xf7 29. ♖xf8+. 28. fxe6 ♖xf6 29. ♖f7

Black resigned

However, such brilliancies are not a grandmaster's "exclusive right". It becomes all the more interesting when outsiders do the same thing against the world's leading players. In fact, to some extent, this was the case with Lilienthal. Though he was anything but an outsider, Capablanca was still clearly the favorite.

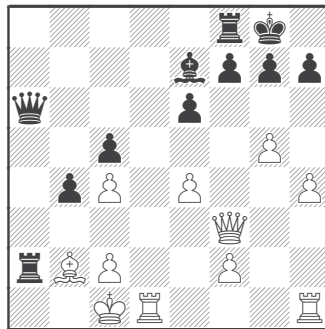
B89

Carlo Juarez Flores

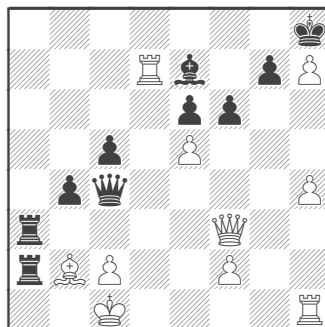
Lev Polugaevsky

Mar del Plata 1971

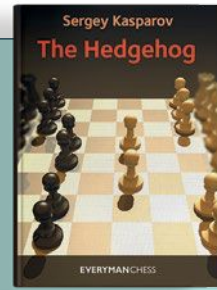
1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘c3 ♘c6 6. ♙c4 e6 7. ♙b3 ♙e7 8. ♙e3 a6 9. ♖e2 ♖c7 10. 0-0 ♘a5! 11. g4 b5 12. g5 ♘xb3+ 13. axb3 13. cxb3 ♘d7 14. ♘b1!?. 13... ♘d7 14. h4 b4 15. ♘a4 ♘c5! 16. ♘xc5 dxc5 17. ♘f3 a5 18. ♘d2 a4!± 19. bxa4 ♖xa4 20. ♘c4 0-0 21. b3 ♖a2 22. ♖f3 ♙a6 23. ♙f4 ♖a7 24. ♙e5 ♙xc4 25. bxc4 ♖a6 26. ♙b2



26... f6?! 27. g6!∞ ♖xc4 27... hxc6 wins. 28. ♖d7 ♖fa8 29. gxf7+ ♘h8 30. e5! 30. ♖d3!? ♖a1+ 31. ♙xa1 ♖xa1+ 32. ♘d2 ♖xd3+ 33. cxd3 ♖xh1 34. ♖xe7 e5 35. ♖c7 ♖f1 36. ♘e2 ♖c1 37. ♘d2 ♖c3±. 30... ♖8a3? 30... b3! 31. ♖xb3!± ♖f4+ 32. ♘b1 c4 wins. Polugaevsky must have expected his opponent to resign, but the next move gave him the usual shock.



31. exf6!= ♖xf3 31... ♙xf6 32. ♖d8+ ♙xd8 33. ♖f8+ ♘h7 34. ♖xg7 mate; 31... gxf6 32. ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 33. ♙xf6 mate. 32. fxe7



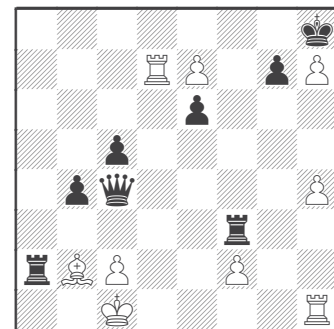
THE HEDGEHOG

By Sergey Kasparov

MSRP: \$29.95

An understanding of Hedgehog structures is an essential component in any chessplayer's knowledge. These structures arise when the black c-pawn is exchanged early on for the white d-pawn (as in the Sicilian Defence). White then adopts a formation with pawns on c4 and e4 and Black curls up in a Hedgehog formation with pawns on a6, b6, d6 and e6.

EVERYMAN CHESS



32... ♖f4+! The only saving idea. 33. ♘b1 33. ♘d1 ♖f7. 33... ♖xb2+! 34. ♘xb2 ♖e5+ 35. ♘c1 White is obviously playing for a win, quite a laudable decision, but a few moves later he will push things too far. 35. ♘b1 ♖a3 36. e8♖+ ♘h7 37. ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 38. ♖h5+ ♘g8 39. ♖e8+ would have led to a perpetual check. 35... ♖a1+ 36. ♘d2 ♖xf2+ 37. ♘e3 ♖f3+!



▲ Lev Polugaevsky. Photo by D. Donskoi.

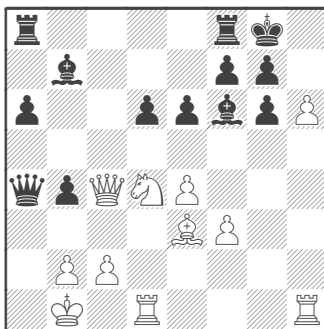
B89

John Watson

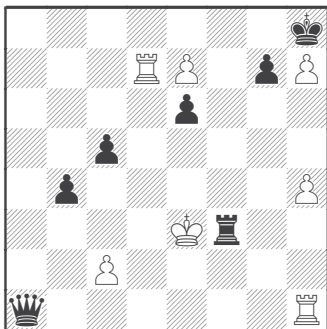
Mark Sherbring

US Open, Atlantic City 1972

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4
♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♙c4 e6 7.♙e3 ♙e7
8.♙e2 a6 9.0-0-0 ♖c7 10.♙b3 ♘a5
11.g4 ♘xb3+ 12.axb3 b5 13.g5 ♘d7
14.h4 ♙b7 15.f3 ♘c5 16.♙b1 b4
17.♘a4 ♙a5 18.h5 ♘xa4 19.bxa4
♙xa4 20.g6 ♙f6 21.♙c4 0-0 22.h6
hxg6



23.e5? The idea is beautiful but the move
is wrong. 23.hxg7 ♙xg7 24.♙e2∞.
23...♙d5? 23...♙xe5 24.hxg7



38.♙e4?? 38.♙xf3! ♙xh1+ 39.♙f4
♙f1+ 40.♙e5 ♙e2+ 41.♙d6 ♙a6+ and
White cannot avoid a perpetual.
38...♙xh1 38...♙a8+!? also wins.
39.e8♙+ ♙f8+

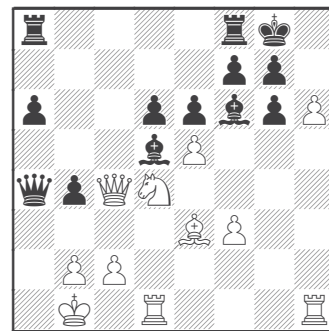
White resigned

The treasure of chess beauty is only partially marred if the initial idea is imperfect. John Watson is now known as a successful writer, but decades ago he also was an active player. Having failed to recall any relevant game of my own, I decided to defend the honor of a fellow chess writer by including the next game:

There is often missing data in chess databases so we took the opportunity to ask John Watson directly what was the (missing) first name of his opponent from 1972. It turned out he remembers both the game and his rival well!

"Imperfect" [used by M.Marín -Ed.] is an understatement, but anytime a great writer and thinker like Marín is attracted by even a part of a game one played, it's quite an honor. Mark Sherbring, whom I played with, is an old friend of mine, and as I recall I was irresponsibly playing off his time trouble – at 21 and ignorant, you're not scared of anything! We actually had a number of good battles; Mark was a creative and, for me, dangerous opponent. John Watson

24...♙xg7+ (24...♙fc8 25.♘xe6! Threatening 26.♙h8 mate. 25...♙xg7 26.♙h7!! ♙e5 27.♘c5 ♙e8 28.♙h4 ♙xf3 29.♙d4 ♙xd1 30.♙h8+ ♙g7 31.♙h6+ ♙f6 32.♙f4+ ♙g7=). With his previous move Black had confidently attacked his opponent's queen... Quite an excusable oversight.

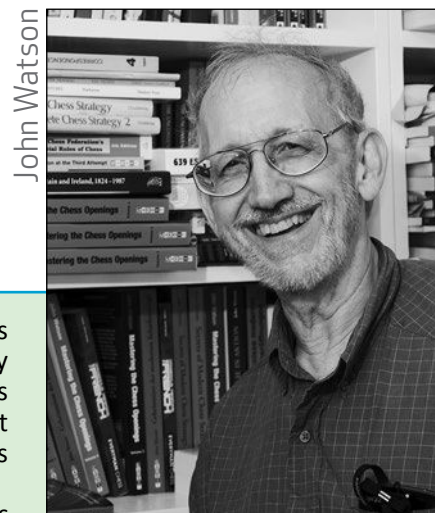


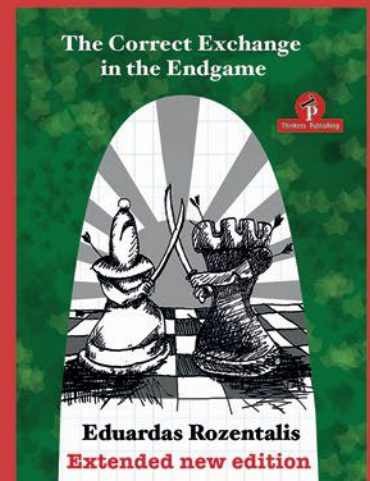
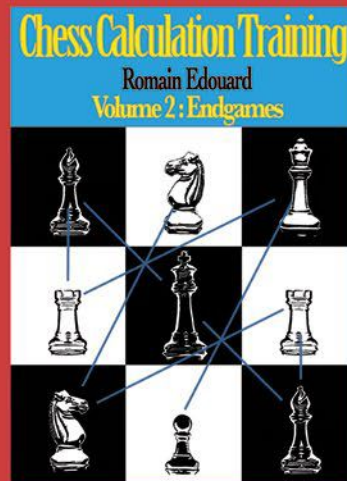
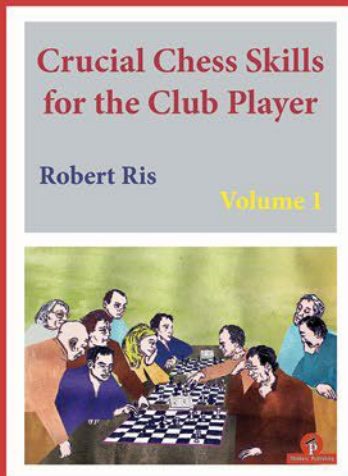
24.exf6! The same familiar theme – but with a different concrete idea.

24...♙xc4 24...gxf6 25.h7+ ♙h8 26.♙c7! (26.♙d3 ♙a2+ 27.♙c1 ♙ac8=) 26...♙a2+ 27.♙c1 ♙ac8 28.♙e7 winning.

25.hxg7 Now Black cannot avert ♙h8 mate.

Black resigned



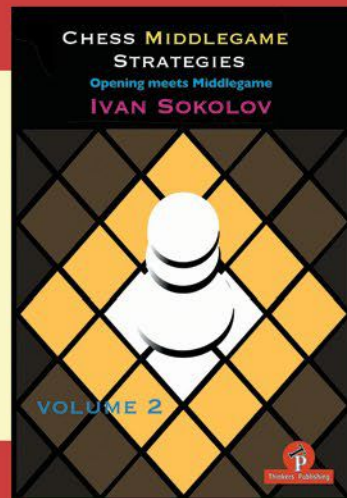


ALWAYS ONE MOVE AHEAD

ALL BOOKS AVAILABLE NOW!

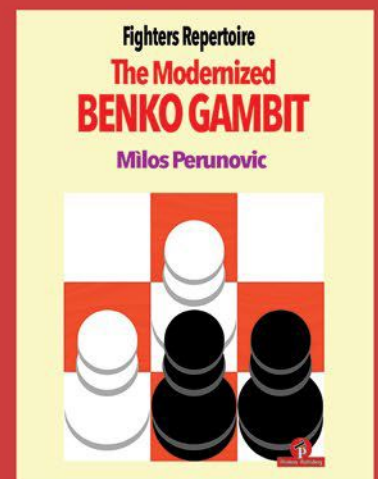
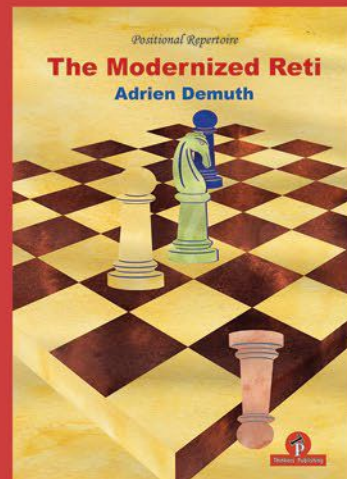
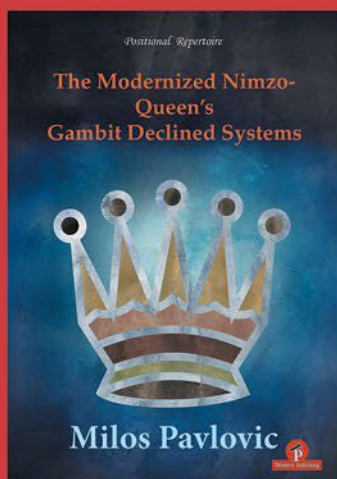


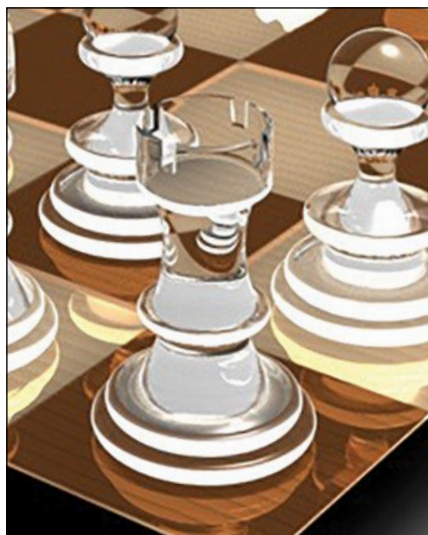
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LIFELINES IN ROOK ENDINGS

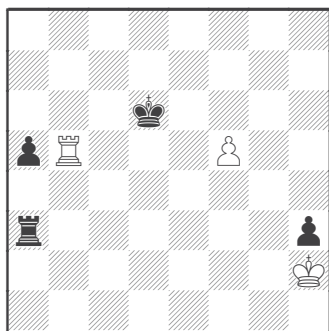
ANYTIME YOU WANT TO PICK UP SOME CHESS WISDOM, JUST OPEN YOUR COPY OF "MY 60 MEMORABLE GAMES" BY BOBBY FISCHER. YOU HAVE IT AT HOME, OF COURSE: IF THERE IS ONE BOOK YOU OWN, IT IS THIS ONE. MINE HAS GATHERED A LOT OF STAINS, AND IT IS IN DESCRIPTIVE NOTATION, BUT NO MATTER WHAT PAGE I TURN TO, I AM ALMOST CERTAIN TO LEARN SOMETHING (AND EVEN IF I HAVE READ IT 100 TIMES, I WILL SEE IT IN A NEW LIGHT).

By **GM ALEX FISHBEIN**

Mikhail Botvinnik

Bobby Fischer

Varna Olympiad, 1962



In this position, Fischer quotes Botvinnik: "Generally speaking, this ending would be drawn even without the KBP – any textbook on the end-game will tell you this."

In the game, Botvinnik did not follow this method, and the game was drawn easily anyway after 61.f6 ♖e6 62.♙b6+ ♜f7 63.♙a6, etc.

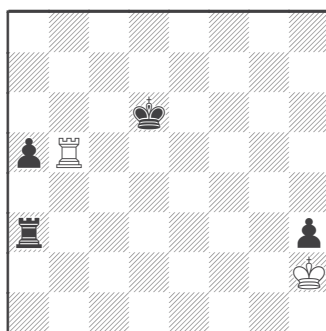
But as a nine-year-old kid reading this book, I was intrigued by this comment. Two pawns down, and still a draw? Maybe it is one reason why I have been fascinated by rook endings (especially very difficult ones to defend) ever since.

I want to share with you some secrets (or lifelines) for drawing a rook ending two pawns down.

The first lifeline is implied here:

LIFELINE #1: Know your theory!

VANCURA POSITION



1...♜c6 The famous "Vancura position" is a draw because the rook is pinned in front of the pawn and cannot get out, and the defending rook has plenty of distance to check away the enemy king.

2.♙g5 2.♙f5 also draws; 2.♙h5? loses, however, because the rook is not happy on the h-file: 2...a4 3.♙h6+ ♜b5 4.♙h5+ ♜b4 5.♙h4+ ♜b3 6.♙xh3+ ♜b2 (the white king is in the way of further checks) 7.♙h4 ♙a2! 8.♜g3 ♜b3.

2...♜b6 **3.♙g6+!** It is time to start checking, because the black rook wants to move away from the a-file, freeing its pawn to advance, after which it would

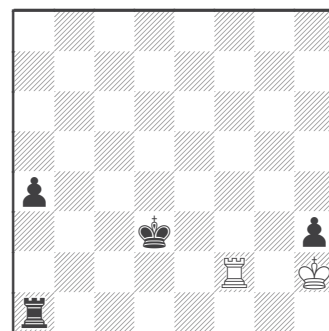
be an easy win. Also note that this defensive method only works against the a-pawn, because the black king cannot go around it from the other side. The white rook has enough checking distance; in fact, the f-file is ideal, as will soon become clear.

3...♜c5 **4.♙g5+ ♜c4** **5.♙g4+ ♜b3** **6.♙g3+ ♜b2** White's play perhaps hasn't been the most precise, and he has run out of checks, but even this is still a draw:

7.♙g5! Continuing to pin down the black rook.

7...a4 **8.♙g4!** **♜c2** **9.♙f4!** Back on the right track: the rook needs to be able to give a check.

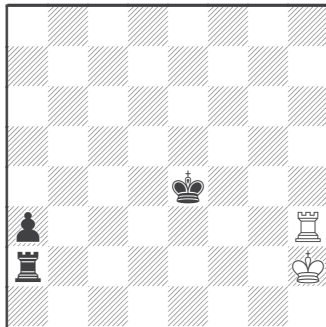
9...♙a1 **10.♙f2+ ♜d3**



11.♙f4! Not 11.♙f3+?? ♜e2 12.♙f4 a3 13.♙a4 ♜d2 14.♙a8 ♜c2.

11...a3 **12.♙f3+!** **♜e4** **13.♙xh3 ♙a2+** **13...a2** **14.♙a3** is a simple theoretical

draw; it is funny that the drawing method there is similar to the Vancura method, except vertically.



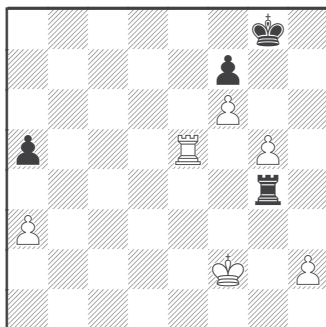
14.♔g1! 14.♔g3?? ♖b2 and Black wins.
14...♔d4 15.♖g3 ♔c4 16.♖f3 ♔b4 17.♖f4+ with a draw.

The pitfalls on the way will probably convince you of the need for Lifeline #1. However, I cannot help you with that here: you really need to learn that theory from endgame textbooks, like Botvinnik said. What I can do, however, is give you some general concepts that will help you understand the theory and apply it to practice. Here, we saw a difference in the activity of rooks. Therefore, our second lifeline is:

LIFELINE #2: An active rook!

Daniel Fridman	2600
Alex Fishbein	2500

Chicago 2005 (variation)

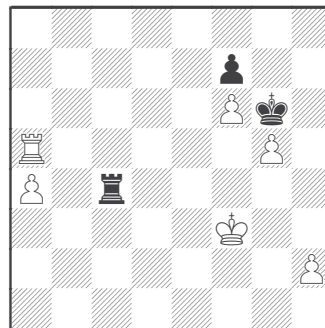


45...♔h7 I wish I had used the second lifeline, because in the game I lost without a fight after **45...♖a4 46.♔f3 ♔h7 47.♖e4! ♖xa3+ 48.♔g4 ♖b3 49.h4**

♖b4 50.♔f5 ♖b1 51.♖e7 ♔g8 52.♖e5 a4 53.♖a5 ♖a1 54.♖a8+ ♔h7 55.♖f8 (notice how much more active the white rook is than mine).

46.♖xa5 ♔g6 Here, I think that my opponent, a strong grandmaster, would have found the winning plan, which begins with **47.♖b5**, releasing the rook from the a-file. There are other winning moves, too, but many players, in his place, would make a mistake here. Let us see what would happen if White just pushed his passed pawn:

47.a4? ♖c4 48.♔f3

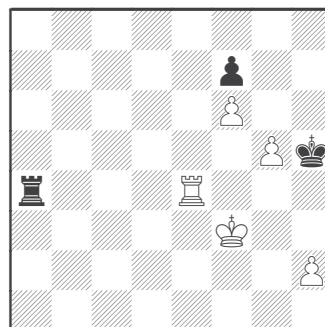


I think this is a highly unusual position. White is up three pawns. Most of his pawns are connected, none doubled, and none about to be captured. However, Black's rook is much more active than White's rook, which is again stuck ahead of its a-pawn. Black keeps harassing White's pawns, and I don't see a win here!

48...♔h5! 48...♖b4? loses to **49.♖e5!! ♖xa4 50.♖e4! ♖a5 51.h4**, and Black cannot save this.

49.♖e5 49.♔e3 ♖b4 (White's rook has no moves!) **50.♔d3 ♖f4!** (analogous to the Vancura position) **51.♔c3 ♖f3+ 52.♔c4 ♖f4+ 53.♔c5 ♔xg5 54.♖a6 ♖f5+** looks like a draw.

49...♖xa4 50.♖e4



...but this position, with the pawn still on



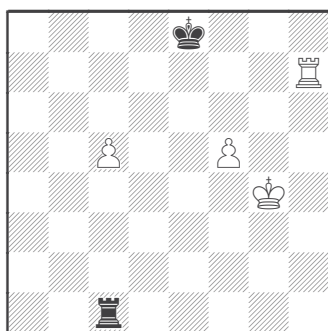
Alex Fishbein is an American grandmaster, residing in New Jersey. He was the winner of the inaugural Denker Tournament of High School Champions in 1985. He won several national and international tournaments in the 1990s, including in Denmark and Norway, and became a grandmaster in 1992. He then began a career in finance but continued to compete in his spare time, including four times in the U.S. Championship in the 2000s. He is known for his endgame knowledge, having won the Best Endgame Prize in the 2004 U.S. Championship and written a well-received book on pawn endings in 1993.

h2 is a draw, for example: 50...♖a3+ 51.♔f4 ♖a5 52.h4 ♔xh4 53.g6 fxg6 54.f7 ♖f5+

To be honest, it is hard for me to believe that with three extra pawns in the position in the last diagram, White cannot win. I have no tablebases that can help me here. If you, the readers, can find a win here for White, please let me know! Otherwise, this is perhaps a unique position where three extra pawns are not enough to win.

Bent Larsen	2620
Eugenio Torre	2430

Leningrad Interzonal, 1973



In the last example, Black was saved not only by an active rook, but also by my third lifeline:

LIFELINE #3:

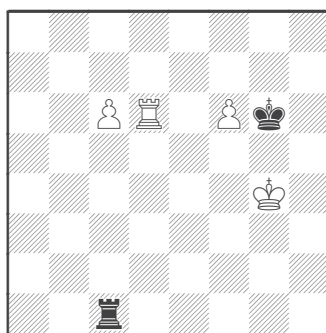
Use your opponent's extra pawns as targets!

We see here a rare example when one of the world's best players fails to win an easily winning rook ending because he forgets that his extra pawns can become weak.

78.♖c7? 78.♔g5 ♖xc5 79.♔g6 is an immediate win: Black cannot avoid the Lucena position. There is no reason to hold on to two extra pawns when you can promote one of them.

78...♔d8 79.♖c6 ♔d7 80.♖d6+ ♔e7 81.f6+?? 81.♖e6+ ♔d7 82.c6+ is also a very easy win.

81...♔f7 82.c6 ♔g6!



Now, however, White cannot win. Both of his pawns have become weak (and his rook is immobile again).

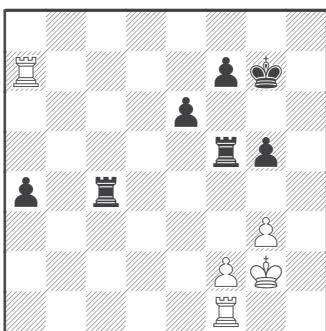
83.♔f3 ♖e1! 84.♔f4 ♖e2! 85.♖d5 ♖c2! 86.♖d6 ♖e2! 87.f7+ ♔xf7 Black had to make several only moves in a row, but now the draw is obvious.

88.♔f5 ♔e7 89.♖d7+ ♔e8 90.♔f6 ♖e1 91.♖d5 ♖c1 92.♖d6 ♖f1+ 93.♔e6 ♖e1+ 94.♔d5 ♖d1+ 95.♔c5 ♖xd6 96.♔xd6 ♔d8 Draw

Alex Fishbein 2410

Michael Adams 2360

Hastings Open, 1988



My next example is much more complicated. I needed all of my lifelines to hold a draw against future top-level GM Michael Adams (at the time, I believe we were both FMs). Black is up two very healthy pawns, and it looks like the win is a matter of simple technique. But let us see how the game continues.

46...g4?! Strangely enough, this move is an inaccuracy which allows White to target Black's pawns (lifeline #3). The pawn on g4 is attacked in some key variations. The correct method is first to improve the king position: 46...♔g6 47.♖a8 ♔f6 48.♔g1 ♖f3 49.♔g2 g4 (now this is good, because Black has ...♖c2

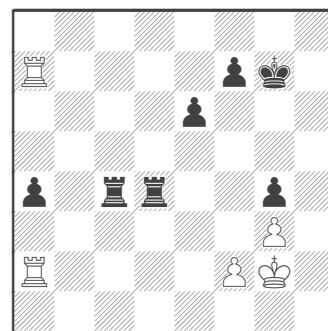
immediately in response to ♖a1) 50.♔g1 a3 51.♖a1 ♖cc3 52.♖a4 ♔f5 53.♖a2 e5 54.♖a5 f6 55.♔g2 ♔g6 and Black will soon break through with ...e3.

47.♔g1 Threatening ♖a1.

47...♖fc5 47...♔f6 48.♖a1 ♖c2 49.♖7xa4 ♖xf2 50.♖xg4, and White's position is extremely difficult, but I am not sure it is lost.

48.♔g2 Not 48.♖a1? ♖c1+.

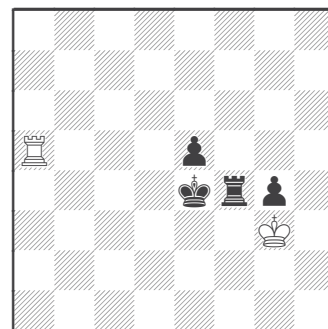
48...♖d5 49.♖a1 ♖dd4 50.♖a2



Now Black's pawn has been stopped on the fourth rank, and it is hard for the king to penetrate. I have a glimmer of hope.

50...♔g6 51.♖a1 f5 52.♖a6 ♖e4 53.♖a5 ♔f6 54.♖a6 f4 55.gxf4 ♖xf4 56.♖a2 ♖fe4 57.♖a5 ♔g6 58.♖a1 ♔f6 59.♖a2 ♔e7 60.♖a6 ♔d7 61.♖a7+ ♔c6 62.♖a8 ♖b4 63.♖a3 e5 64.♖a6+ ♔b5 65.♖a8 ♖f4 66.♖e8 ♖be4 67.♖b8+ ♔c5 68.♖a8 ♖e2 Not seeing a way to make progress, Black liquidates into a rook + e + g pawn vs. rook ending, but it turns out, surprisingly, to be drawn.

69.♖8xa4 ♖exf2+ 70.♔g3 ♖2f3+ 71.♖xf3 ♖xa4 72.♖f8 ♖d4 73.♖a8 ♔d5 74.♖a3 ♖f4 75.♖a5+ ♔e4



It is well known that this ending with f- and h-pawns is drawn, but I am not sure this drawn position, with e- and g-pawns, is common knowledge. White's

king blockades the more advanced pawn, and White has just enough room to check away the opposing king.

76.♖a8! The rook needs to be active (lifeline #2), otherwise Black would be able to play ...♟f5 and then gradually unwind.

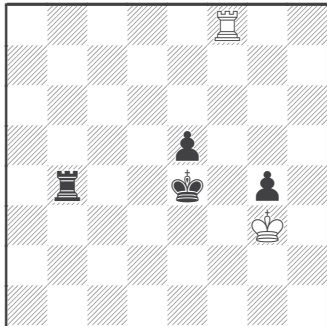
76...♟f1 77.♖a7 Of course, on no account can I play 77.♟xg4?? ♖g1+ 78.♟h3 ♟e3 79.♖a3+ ♟f4 80.♖a4+ e4, with the Lucena position coming soon.

77...♟g1+ 78.♟f2 ♖d1 79.♟g3! Black was threatening 79...♖d3.

79...♖f1 80.♖a8 ♖f4 81.♖a7 ♟d5 82.♖a5+ ♟e6 83.♖a8 But not 83.♖a6+?? ♟f5 and Black will make progress.

83...♖d4 Or 83...♟f5 84.♖f8+ ♟e4 85.♖a8.

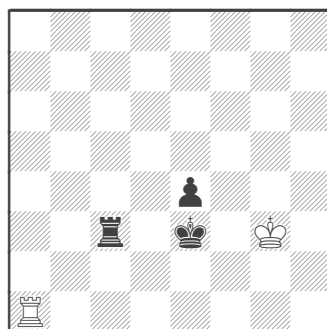
84.♖e8+ ♟d5 85.♖a8 ♟c4 86.♖a5 ♖e4 87.♖a4+ ♟d5 88.♖a8 ♖b4 89.♖a5+ ♟e6 90.♖a8 ♟f5 91.♖f8+ ♟e4



92.♟xg4! Now I can take the pawn. Black's remaining pawn is not advanced far enough.

92...♟d3+ 93.♟g3 e4 94.♖a8! By no means the only move, but good technique. When you know a few theoretical positions (lifeline #1), you will know to put the rook on the side here.

94...♖c4 95.♖a3+ ♖c3 96.♖a2 ♟e3 97.♖a1



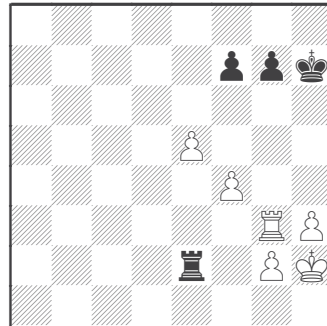
97...♟d4+ Leading to the Philidor position, which is very easy. He should have verified that I knew the side check defense, for example: 97...♟e2+ 98.♟g2 e3 99.♖a2+ ♟d1 100.♟f1! (the only move to draw).

98.♟f2 ♖c2+ 99.♟e1 ♖b2 Draw

Samuel Reshevsky

Efim Geller

Candidates Tournament, Zurich 1953



Here, it looks like Black should just resign. However, in rook endings, anything can happen. Black is saved by our final lifeline:

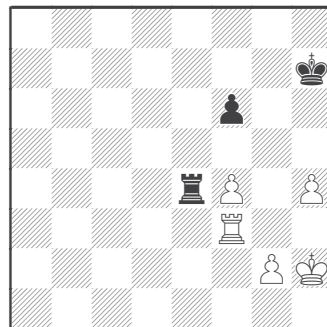
LIFELINE #4:

Stalemate!

It is hard to believe that stalemate can happen here, but let's see:

45.h4 Geller gives this move a question mark. It does give Black some practical chances, but it still wins easily.

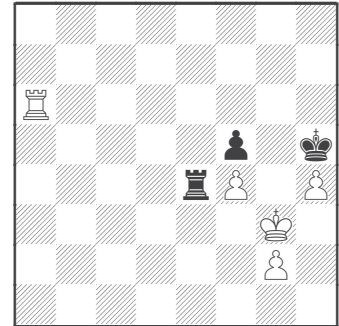
45...♖e4 46.♖f3 f6! 47.exf6 gxf6



48.♟g3! Good technique here. Much weaker is 48.g4? f5!, leaving White a

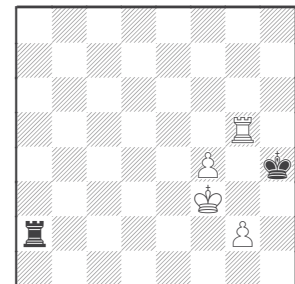
choice between f- and h-pawns with 49.gxf5 and blocked and weak pawns after 49.g5 (I am not sure about the evaluation of this last position).

48...♟g6 49.♖a3 f5 50.♖a6+ ♟h5



51.♖f6?? After 51.♖a8! ♖e3+ 52.♟f2 ♖b3 53.♖g8! ♟xh4 54.g3+ ♟h5 55.♖g5+ Black would have to resign.

51...♖e3+ 52.♟f2 ♖a3 53.g3 Or 53.♖xf5+ ♟xh4 54.♖g5 (otherwise ...♟g4 and White is stymied) 54...♖a2+ 55.♟f3



55...♖f2+! ...with an especially nice stalemate.

53...♖f3+! 53...♖xg3 also works.

54.♟e2 ♖xg3 55.♖xf5+ ♟xh4 56.♟f2 ♖a3 57.♖g5 ♖b3 58.♖g1 ♟h5 59.♟e2 ♖a3 60.f5 ♖a5 Draw

The moral of this story: Never give up until your opponent has demonstrated the win! Even two pawns down in a rook ending, you have several lifelines. Try to use them!





ARE THERE ENDGAME SPECIALISTS IN MODERN CHESS?

Play it Again, Sam!

ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL REQUISITES OF GOOD CHESS, ACCORDING TO THE GREAT ARON NIMZOWITSCH, IS THE ABILITY TO TREAT THE ENDGAME WELL. WE ARE LEARNING FROM THE VIRTUOSOS FROM THE PAST, BUT WHAT ABOUT MODERN ENDGAME HEROES? AMERICAN GM SAM SHANKLAND IS ONE OF THESE, AS ENDGAME GURU KARSTEN MUELLER SHOWS IN THIS DEDICATED ARTICLE.

by **GM KARSTEN MUELLER**



Photo by David Llada.

I have

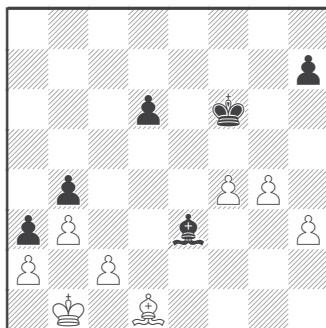
noticed Sam Shankland's endgame skills, and it's quite a rare virtue among younger players. Sam was a member of the US team, which won the Chess Olympiad in Baku. He plays enterprising chess and always fights to the very end, so it was not difficult to find recent examples of his endgame play, which here I have sorted by strategical motifs.

THE BREAKTHROUGH

Pure opposite colored bishop endings have a great drawing tendency and positional considerations are often more important than material.

Sam Shankland	2666
Emilio Cordova	2655

Saint Louis (Winter Classic A), 2017



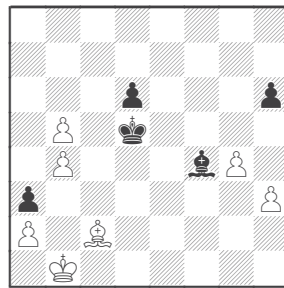
Here White must open a second front on the queenside.

44.c3!! Shankland opens a road for his king and creates another passed pawn, which overloads the defence. After 44.f5? ♗d4 45.c4 ♗g5 Black's fortress can't be breached as White's only real trumps are on the kingside, where Black's blockade cannot be penetrated.

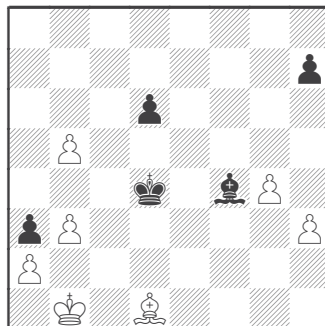
44...♗xf4 44...bxc3 does not defend due to 45.f5 d5 (45...♗c5 46.♗c2 ♗b4 47.♗d3 d5 48.♗d4+-) 46.♗c2 d4 47.b4 ♗e5 48.♗d3 ♗g5 49.b5 ♗d8 50.♗c4 This time Black's blockade can be

broken as White has passed pawns on both wings. Black's counterplay is just too slow. 50...♗e4 51.♗c2+ ♗e3 and now White can overload the defending bishop with 52.g5 ♗xg5 53.b6 ♗d2 54.♗d3 c2 55.♗xc2 ♗xc2 56.♗xd4+-.

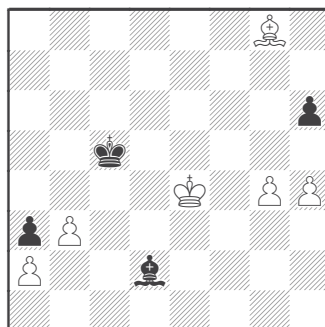
45.cxb4 ♗e5 46.b5 ♗d4 46...♗d5 47.♗c2 h6 48.b4



48...♗c4 (48...♗e3 49.♗b3+ ♗e4 50.♗c2 d5 51.h4 ♗e5 52.♗d3 ♗f2 53.g5 hxg5 54.hxg5 ♗f5 55.♗xd5 ♗xg5 56.♗c4+-) 49.b6 ♗b5 (49...♗xb4 50.b7 d5 51.h4+-) 50.b7 d5 51.♗b3 ♗c6 52.h4 d4 53.g5 ♗xb7 54.g6 ♗e5 55.♗c2 wins.



47.b6 d5 48.b7 ♗c5 49.♗c2 ♗b6 50.♗f3 ♗xb7 51.♗xd5+ ♗b6 52.♗d3 ♗c5 53.♗e4 ♗d2 54.♗g8 h6 55.h4



55...♗e1 55...♗d6 56.♗f5 ♗e7 57.♗c4 ♗f8 58.♗g6 ♗e7 59.g5 hxg5 60.hxg5 ♗f8 61.♗f6 ♗c3+ 62.♗e6 wins.



Karsten Mueller is a German grandmaster and world renowned authority on endgames. Karsten was born in 1970 and lives in Hamburg. He earned the Grandmaster title in 1998 and a PhD in mathematics in 2002. He was a German vice-champion in 1997. Mueller is the author of *Fundamental Chess Endings*, *Secrets of Pawn Endings*, *How to Play Chess Endgames* and *Magic of Chess Tactics*.

56.g5! and White's passed pawns on both wings will decide the day as they are four files apart and cannot be halted along one and the same diagonal. Of course not 56.h5?? ♗d2= with an impregnable fortress.

56...h5 57.♗f7 ♗xh4 58.♗f5 ♗e1 59.♗xh5 ♗d6 60.g6 ♗c3 61.b4
Black resigned

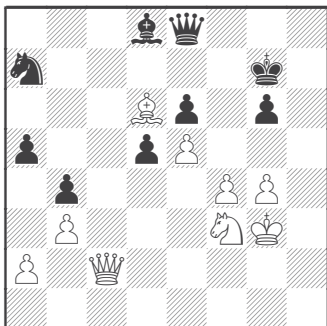
THE RIGHT EXCHANGE

In the next example Black's bishop defends all inroads and should be exchanged, which also highlights the bad position of the knight on a7.

Sam Shankland 2674

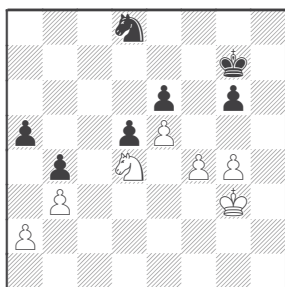
Antoaneta Stefanova 2512

Gibraltar Masters, 2017



46.♔c7! Without his bishop Black will not be able to defend his confined position, as he has too many static weaknesses.

46...♟b5?! 46...♞c6!? is more tenacious, but the resulting knight endgame is also lost: 47.♞xc6 ♟xc6 48.♔xd8 ♟xd8 49.♞d4



White's knight is much stronger than Black's and his king can make inroads into the enemy position, e.g. 49...g5 (49...♔f8 50.f5 g5 51.♞f3 ♟c6 52.fxe6 ♔e7 53.♞xg5 ♟xe5 54.♞f3 ♟g6 55.♞d4+-; 49...♔f7 50.♔h4 ♔g7 51.f5 gxf5 52.gxf5 exf5 53.♔g5+-) 50.fxg5 ♔h7 51.♔h4 ♔g6 52.♞e2 winning.

47.♔xd8 ♞xd8 48.♞g5 48.♞c6 ♟c3 49.♞d4 wins.

48...♞e8 48...♞b6 is met by 49.♞c5 ♞xc5 50.♞xe6+ ♔f7 51.♞xc5 ♞d4 52.♞b7+-.

49.♞c5 Black's defence is overloaded as the knight cannot help.

49...♔g8 49...♟c3 50.♞c7+ ♔g8 51.♞h7+ ♔f8 52.♞h8+ ♔e7 53.♞g7+ ♔d8 54.♞a7 ♞c6 55.♞f7+ ♔c8 56.♞d6+ ♔d8 57.♞xa5+ ♔d7 58.♞xb4 wins.

50.♞xe6! ♟c3 50...♞xe6 51.♞xb5 g5



▲ Antoaneta Stefanova, Belgrade 2013. Photo by Antonio Ahel.

In the next example, exchanging queens is the easiest solution.

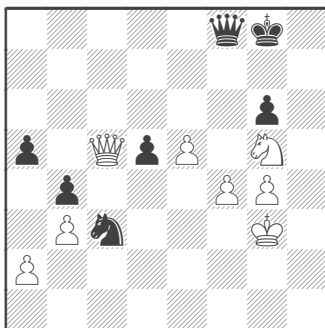
Sam Shankland 2666

Ray Robson 2668

US Championship, St. Louis 2017

52.♞b8+ ♔f7 53.♞c7+ ♔g8 54.f5 is decisive.

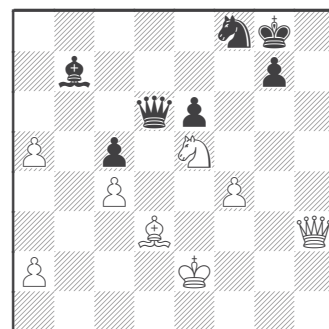
51.♞g5 ♞f8



52.♞e3!? Retaining the queens is easier than 52.♞xf8+ ♔xf8 53.f5, which wins as well of course.

52...♞e7 53.e6 ♟e4+ 54.♞xe4 ♞xe6 55.f5 gxf5 56.♞g5+ ♔f7 57.♞xf5+ ♞xf5 58.♞d6+

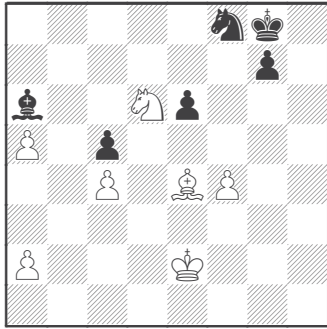
Black resigned



41.♞h8+!? This is easiest from the human point of view, as Black is too passively placed and has too many problems on the queenside. The computer prefers 41.♞h5, to exploit Black's weak king, e.g. 41...♞c7 (41...♞e7 42.♞g6 ♟xg6 43.♞xg6 ♞f6 44.♞h8+ ♔f7 45.♞e5+ ♔e7 46.♞b8+-) 42.♞h7+ ♟xh7 43.♞e8+ ♟f8 44.♞g6+- and Black is defenseless.

41...♔xh8 42.♞f7+ ♔g8 43.♞xd6

♙a6 44.♙e4



Shankland's forces dominate completely and White will win on the queenside sooner rather than later.

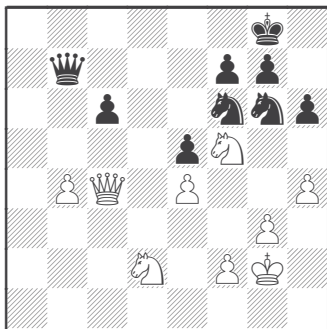
44...♙d7 45.♙c6 ♙b8 46.♙b5 ♙f8 47.♙e4

Black resigned

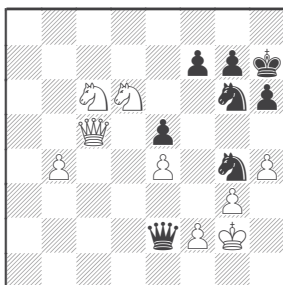
In the next case Shankland provokes an exchange of queens.

Sam Shankland	2679
Sam Sevan	2591

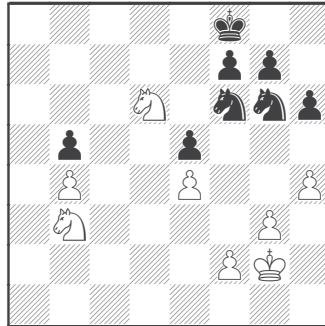
Millionaire Open, Atlantic City 2016



34.♙b3 ♙b5? Without queens Black will not have enough counterplay. After 34...♙d7!, to meet 35.♙a5 with 35...♙d2, Black can harbor hopes of holding the game as 36.♙xc6?! can be met by 36...♙g4 37.♙c5 ♙e2 38.♙d6 ♙h7



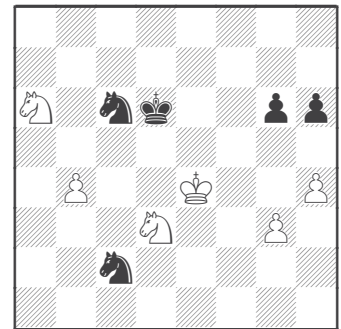
...and Black's activity is enough for a draw: 39.♙xf7 (39.b5? even backfires due to 39...♙f8 40.♙a7 ♙e6 winning.) 39...♙xe4+ 40.♙g1 ♙e1+=. 35.♙xb5 cxb5 36.♙d6 ♙f8



37.♙c5? Now Black gets some counterplay and can probably defend, but the position has both depth and difficulty as it is not easy to establish harmony between the attacking knights. 37.♙f3! ♙e7 38.♙a5 was called for as White will win the b5 pawn and can then activate his king and combine play on both wings, while Black has no counterplay. One sample line runs 38...♙d7 39.♙xb5 ♙c8 40.♙e2 ♙e7 41.♙d3 ♙b8 42.♙c3 ♙e6 43.♙d5 ♙d6 44.♙c4 ♙b5 45.♙c3 ♙a7 46.f4 exf4 47.gxf4 f5 48.e5 ♙ac6 49.b5 ♙b4+ 50.♙d4 winning.

37...♙e7! Sevan brings his misplaced g6 knight back into the game, which gives him counterplay.

38.f3 38.♙xb5 can be met by 38...♙c6 39.♙d3 ♙xe4 with good drawing chances. 38...♙c6 39.♙d3 ♙d4 40.♙xe5 ♙e7 41.♙b7 After 41.♙dxf7 ♙e6 White's knights are too clumsily placed. 41...♙c2 42.♙d3 ♙d7 43.f4 ♙b8 44.e5 ♙c6 45.♙f3 ♙e6 46.♙d6 46.♙e4 is met by 46...f5+ 47.exf6 ♙xf6. 46...f6 47.♙xb5 fxe5 48.♙c7+ ♙d6 49.♙a6 49.♙e8+ ♙d5 50.fxe5 ♙xe5+ 51.♙xe5 ♙xe5 52.♙xg7 ♙xb4=. 49...exf4 50.♙xf4 g6 51.♙e4



51...♙d4? The knights now protect each other, which can add stability to a position but, of course, in return the knights lose flexibility, which is more



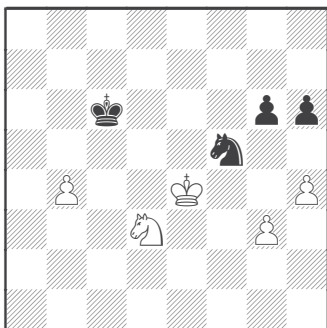
Sam Sevan,
World Cup 2017.
Photo by
Lennart Ootes.

important here. 51...♖a3! is called for, when Black's active knights create major problems and I am not able to say if White can convert his extra pawn.

52.♖b8! An original way to exchange knights and thereby open more inroads into Black's position.

52...♖f5 52...♖xb8 53.♖xd4 ♖c6+ 54.♖e4+-.

53.♖xc6 ♖xc6 53...♖xg3+ 54.♖f3 ♖f5 55.♖a7 ♖xh4+ 56.♖e4 wins.



54.♖f4? The wrong order of moves. 54.♖e5+ ♖b5 55.♖f4 is decisive, as now 55...♖xh4 56.gxh4 g5+ 57.♖g4 gxh4 can be met by 58.♖d3 winning.

54...♖b5? Black misses the amazing 54...♖d5!! 55.b5 (55.♖e5 ♖xh4 56.gxh4 g5+ 57.hxg5 hxg5+ 58.♖f5 g4=) 55...♖xh4 56.gxh4 g5+ 57.hxg5 hxg5+ 58.♖xg5 ♖d6=.

55.♖e5 ♖e7 56.♖f7 ♖f5

57.♖xh6!? The most beautiful solution. 57...♖xh6 58.♖g5 ♖f5 59.h5 ♖xg3 60.h6 ♖f5 61.h7 ♖d6 62.♖xg6

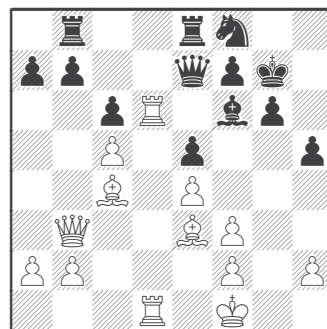
Black resigned

The following example demonstrates effective simplification.

Sam Shankland, New York 2016. ▼
Photo by Josip Asik.

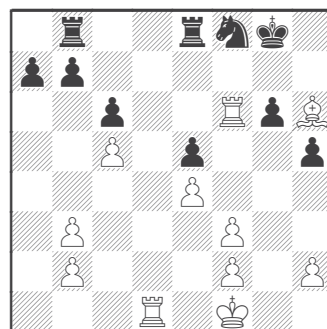
Sam Shankland	2674
Konstantin Kavutskiy	2377

PRO League Pacific, chess.com 2017



White stands much better due to his active rooks and bishops. But it would be hard to make further progress if the following small combination were not available:

21.♖xf7! ♖xf7 22.♖h6+ ♖g8 23.♖xf6 ♖xb3 24.axb3

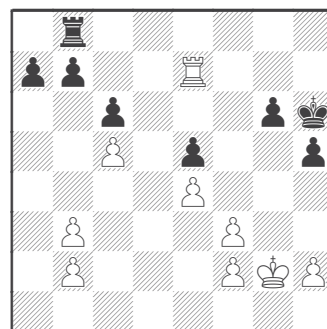


White is winning due to the extra pawn and superior activity.

24...♖h7 24...♖e6 25.♖xe6 ♖xe6 26.♖d7 ♖d8 27.♖e7 ♖xc5 28.♖xe5 ♖xb3 29.♖e7+-.

25.♖xf8 25.♖g5 ♖g7 26.♖dd6 wins as well.

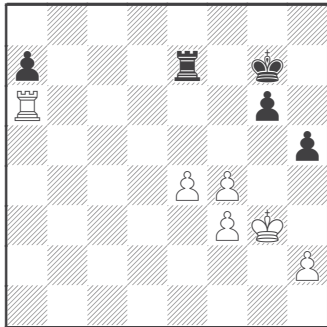
25...♖xf8 26.♖d7+ ♖h6 27.♖xf8 ♖xf8 28.♖g2 ♖b8 29.♖e7 29.h4!?+-.





29...b6?! 29...♔g5! is more tenacious, but White should still win in the long run, e.g. 30.b4 a6 31.♖f7 h4 32.h3 ♕h6 33.♞e7 ♕g5 34.♞h7 with a zugzwang position.

30.♞xe5 bxc5 31.♞xc5 ♞xb3 32.♞xc6 ♞xb2 33.♞a6 ♞b7 34.f4 ♕g7 35.♕g3 ♞e7 36.f3

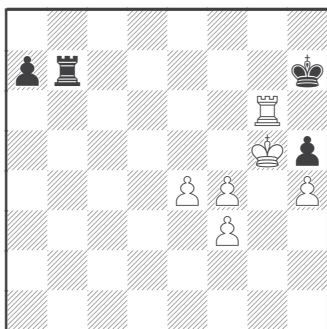


36...♞b7 If 36...♖f7 37.e5 ♞e7 38.♞a5 ♖f7 39.h4 ♕h6 40.♞a4 ♕g7 then White's king can be transferred to the centre: 41.♕f2 ♞b7 42.♕e3 ♞e7 43.♕e4 ♖f7 44.♞d4 a5 45.♞a4 ♞a7 46.f5 gxf5+ 47.♕xf5 ♖f7+ 48.♕e4 ♞a7 49.f4+.

37.♕h4 ♕h7 37...♕h6 38.f5 ♞g7 39.e5+.

38.♕g5 ♞g7 38...♞b5+ 39.e5 ♞b7 40.♞xg6 ♞g7 41.♞xg7+ ♕xg7 42.f5 a5 43.f6+ ♕f7 44.e6+ ♕xe6 45.♕g6+.

39.h4 ♞b7 40.♞xg6



40...♞b5+ 40...♞g7 does not help as White is quicker after 41.f5 a5 42.♞xg7+ ♕xg7 43.f6+ ♕f7 44.e5 a4 45.e6+ ♕xe6 46.♕g6 a3 47.f7 a2 48.f8♖ a1♖ 49.♖f7+ ♕d6 50.♖f6+ wins.

41.f5 a5 42.♞a6 ♞c5 43.f4 ♞b5 44.e5 ♞c5 45.♞a7+ ♕g8 46.f6 ♕f8 47.♕g6 ♞c8 48.♞h7

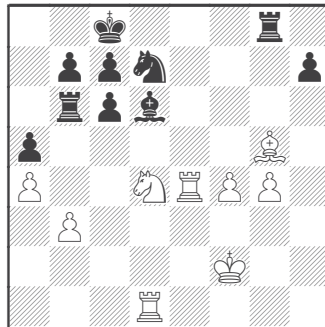
Black resigned

THE COUNTERATTACK

Mating attacks do occur in the endgame.

Sam Sevian	2587
Sam Shankland	2666

Winter Classic A, St. Louis 2017

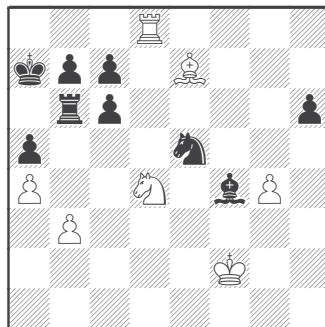


Shankland exploits the lack of harmony in White's camp with precise play.

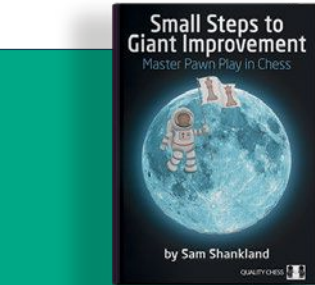
31...h6! 32.♞de1 ♕b8 33.♞e8+? White's attack peters out as the black king is safe on a7 due to having an exit square on b6, whereas White's king is exposed and the price for its safety will always be too high. He should put his money on the kingside passed pawns by playing 33.♞xh6 ♖f6 34.g5 ♖xe4+ 35.♞xe4 ♞b4 36.♕f3 c5 37.♖f5 ♞xb3+ 38.♕g4 with good drawing chances.

33...♞xe8 34.♞xe8+ ♕a7 35.♞e7! Sevian limits the damage. 35.♞xh6? is refuted by 35...♖f6 36.♞e6 ♞c5 37.♞g7 ♞xd4+ 38.♕f3 c5 winning.

35...♞xf4 36.♞d8 ♖e5



37.♖e6? 37.♕e2 ♞g5 38.♞xg5 hxg5 39.♞g8 ♖f7 40.♞g7 ♞b4 41.♖c2 ♖f4 42.♕e3 was the last chance to fight on. 37...♞xb3 38.♕g2 ♞b2+ 39.♕f1 39.♕h3?! ♞h2 mate.



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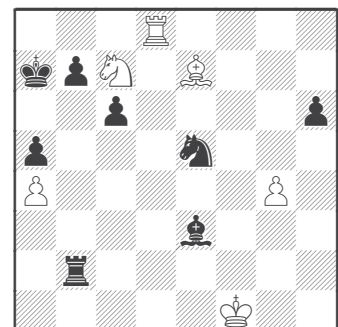
Available 28th March

GM Sam Shankland breaks down the principles of Pawn Play to basic, easily understandable guidelines every chess player should know. He starts with extremely simple examples, but then lifts the level, showing how grandmasters could have made better decisions by using the book's guidelines. As a member of the US national team, Shankland is a double Olympiad gold medalist.



QUALITY CHESS

39...♞e3 40.♖xc7



40...♖f3 Shankland closes the mating net, whereas there is a hole in White's net. 41.♞a8+ ♕b6 42.♖e6 ♖f2 mate.

White resigned ■

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Desperado

WHEN PLAYING IN A BIG, FESTIVE OPEN TOURNAMENT IN LAS VEGAS, THE CHESS ELEMENT (AND NOT GAMBLING) OF THE TRIP CAN STILL REPRESENT THE BIGGEST SWING.

by **GM MICHAEL ROHDE** |||

On June 6, 2007, six-time US Chess Champion Walter Browne walked into the Rio All Suite Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas and entered event #10 of the World Series of Poker, a \$2,000 No-Limit Hold'em tournament. Two and a half days later, Browne emerged in 7th place with a prize of \$58,515. Then, on June 9, Walter jumped into event #16, a \$2,500 H.O.R.S.E. event (a five-game rotation of Hold'em, Omaha, Razz, Stud (7-stud high only) and Eight or

Better (7-stud hi-lo)). Two and a half days later, Browne finished in 2nd place, this time collecting a prize of \$131,790. This was no crossover chess player trying his hand at poker.

Browne was a dedicated poker player ever since his teenage years in New York City, when it was typical for chess players to become masters at many different types of games. And East Coast poker players still recount Walter's legendary, excruciatingly

analytical style. They would practically fall off their chairs waiting for him to finish processing all the available candidate moves in any situation. But Browne's poker opponents would have been better off if they also played chess. Chess players are very aware, for example, of the paradox that time pressure addicts are also usually very good at blitz.

Although Walter was in some sense returning to his roots, for many young chess players this was yet another example of why they should unleash their game-playing skills on the lush green felt of the poker tables. The poker boom ushered in by the aptly named amateur Chris Moneymaker winning

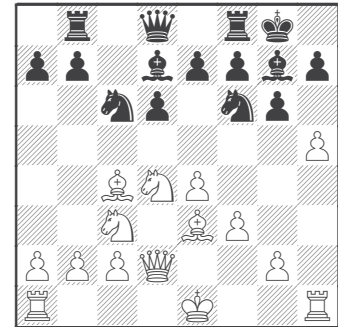


the main event of the World Series of Poker in 2003 was in full steam. And since then it has been clear that big chess tournaments in gambling-friendly locales provide that extra level of excitement that draws in players from all over the world, and that some very talented souls have been able to replicate Browne's success at both disciplines. Years later, this symbiosis provided the backdrop for Maurice Ashley's "Millionaire Chess" series of events, first in Las Vegas and then in Atlantic City.

When playing in a big, festive open tournament in Las Vegas, the chess element of the trip can still represent the biggest swing. Such was the case in the game between 17-year-old FM Sanjay Ghatti and IM Farai Mandizha

from the fifth round of Continental Chess Association's annual North American Open, held December 26-30, 2017 at Bally's Hotel. Both players were 2-2 thus far in the 9-round event, and a win was mandatory at all costs. Accordingly, Mandizha, currently a chess teacher in New York City, essayed the Dragon against Ghatti, an Atlanta-based prodigy, and both were happy to throw their pawns forward immediately in an attempt to open some lines. While Ghatti's stock attack on the h-file was picking up steam, Mandizha moved "all-in" on the queenside, daring Ghatti to call the potential bluff.

... ♗g7-f6. Then 15. ♖xg7 ♜xg7 and Black will have a mixture of potential defensive resources, including ...f7-f6, ...e7-e6 and ...e7-e5.



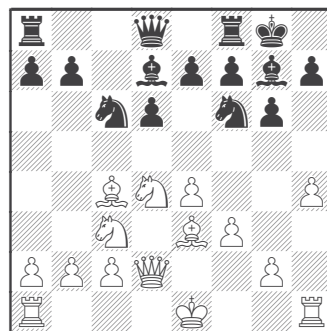
B77

Sanjay Ghatti	2216
Farai Mandizha	2397

North American Open, Las Vegas 2017

1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♗f6 5.♖c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♞d2 ♖c6 9.♗c4 The most popular. White's other choices here, 9.g4 and 9.0-0-0, also act in some way against Black playing ...d6-d5.

9...♗d7 10.h4



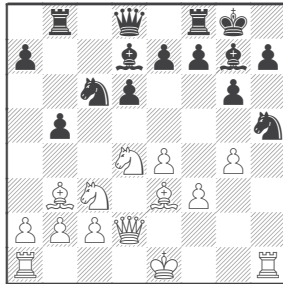
10...♞b8 On 10...♞c8 11.♗b3 ♗e5 12.0-0-0 is the main line, with Black now usually choosing 12...h5 over the older 12...♖c4. Or if White jumps the gun with 12.h5 ♖xh5 13.g4 (If 13.0-0-0 ♗g3) then Black has the disturbing tactic 13...♞c4.

11.h5 On 11.0-0-0 b5 12.♗b3 (Unclear is 12.♖dxb5 ♗e5 13.♗e2 ♞a5 14.♖d4) 12...♖a5 13.♗h6 (13.h5 ♖c4 should be fine, as Black can later recapture on g6 with the f-pawn.) 13...♖c4 14.♞g5, when 14...♖h5 is interesting, menacing



Grandmaster Michael Rohde, a Brilliancy Prize winner at the 1986, 1987 and 1988 US Championships, US Open Champ in 1991 (and equal first in 2007), wrote a popular "Game of the Month" column in *Chess Life* from 1991-2001 and is author of *Play the Sveshnikov* and *The Great Evans Gambit Debate*.

11...♟xh5 Stunningly, this could be where Black gets into trouble. In this line, it is generally best to simply throw the b-pawn forward with 11...b5, and if White takes it, there will be auto-compensation based on the b-file. But here there is a more specific reason why the move works. 12.♟b3 (12.♟dxb5 ♞e5 13.♟e2 ♟xh5 is uncomfortable for White because 14 g4 ♟g3 delivers a monkey wrench.) 12...♟xh5 13.g4



...and now 13...♟g3 is playable due to an amazing series of diversions: 14.♟h3 b4 15.♟d5 e6 16.♟xc6 ♟xc6 17.♟xb4 ♟xb4 18.♟xb4 ♟xb2 19.♟d1 ♟f6 with a very disturbing double hit against c3 and f3. Then 20.♟xd6 ♟e5 21.♟d3 ♟xf3 and White's position continues to fall apart after, for example, 22.♟f2 ♟c3+ 23.♟d2 ♟xd2+ 24.♟xd2 ♟xe4+ 25.♟e3 ♟xg4.

12.g4 ♟f6 12...♟e5 does not look good as after 13.♟b3 ♟f6 14.0-0-0 b5 15.♟h6 White is nicely set up to continue the attack. 12...♟g3 13.♟h3 b5 is an attempt to transpose into the line above after 14.♟b3 b4. But it is not trustworthy as White can interrupt this process in several ways, including 14.♟xc6 ♟xc6 15.♟h6.

13.0-0-0 b5 13...♟xd4 (usually a troublesome move for Black to play in the Dragon) 14.♟xd4 b5 15.♟b3 b4 16.♟d5 e5 17.♟e3 ♟xd5 18.♟xd5 is very bad for Black as it is only White who is left with an attack.

14.♟b3 Definitely not 14.♟dxb5 ♞e5 15.♟e2 ♟xb5 16.♟xb5 ♟xf3 and b2 becomes the weakest square on the board.

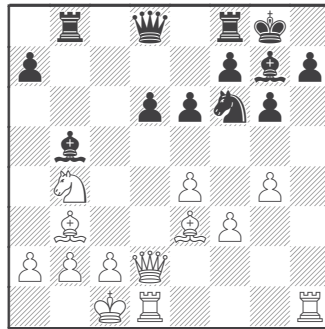
14...b4 Black has a difficult choice here. 14...♟e5 15.♟h6, although Black is still in the game after giving up the exchange

by 15...♟h8, but not 15...e6 16.♟xg7 ♟xg7 17.♟h6+ ♟g8 18.g5 ♟h5 19.♟xh5 gxh5 20.♟h1 and White is winning.

14...a5 15.♟xc6 (Not as good is 15.♟h6 ♟xd4 16.♟xd4 a4 17.♟d5 ♟xh6+ 18.♟xh6 e5) 15...♟xc6 16.♟h6 and again Black probably should resort to 16...♟h8; 14...♟a5 15.♟h6 ♟h8 is similar to 14...♟e5 but may be more artful in that a later ...♟a5xb3 has become an option.

15.♟d5 e6 Not satisfied with routine knight trades which leave White with the initiative, Mandizha jettisons the b-pawn.

16.♟xc6 ♟xc6 17.♟xb4 ♟b5 17...♟a8 probably raises the most practical difficulties. On b5, the bishop is just in the way.



18.♟h2 18.♟xd6 ♟xd6 19.♟xd6 a5, menacing 20 ... a4, creates a degree of obscurity. 18.♟xa7, however, removes Black's last battering ram on the queenside and leaves White in charge, with the knight on b4 now a nice defensive bulwark.

18...♟a5 19.♟d2 Very strong were both 19.♟f4 ♟xb4 (or 19...e5 20.♟d2 ♟b6 21.♟h6) 20.♟xd6 winning material, and 19.♟xd6 with the idea 19...♟xb4 20.e5.

19...♟b6 20.♟c3 The bishop finally takes up the monster post on the long diagonal, but it must be preserved.

20...♟fc8 21.♟xd6 A serious mistake. 21.♟d4 was still strong.

21...♟e3+ 22.♟b1 22.♟d2 ♟xf3 is a mess.

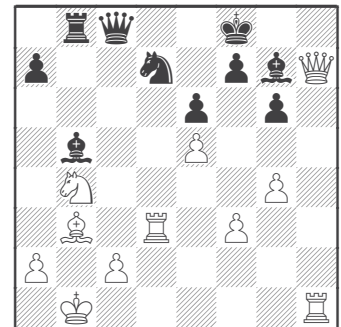
22...♟xc3 23.bxc3 ♟xc3 White was banking on some vicious discovery with the d6 rook, but it turns out that Black's

battery on the long diagonal is more significant.

24.♟d3 The clever text forces Black to displace his b5 bishop if he is to capture the rook. In contrast, 24.♟c6 does not work after 24...♟xc6 25.♟xb8+ ♞e8, and 24.♟xe6 fails to 24...♟d7.

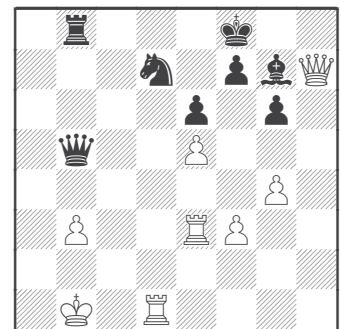
24...♟c8 25.e5 25.♟c3 again fails because Black is able to maintain the bishop at b5 in the variation 25...♟xc3 26.♟xb8+ ♞e8.

25...♟d7 26.♟xh7+ ♟f8



27.♟e3 27.f4 may be mandatory in order to keep the long diagonal shut. Then 27...a5 28.a4 ♟xd3 29.♟xd3 ♟c3 30.♟b2 ♞c5 31.♟h3 is one possibility, though Black has more than enough compensation for his current one-pawn deficit after, for example, 31...♟b4.

27...♟c5 28.♟e4 a5 29.c4 ♟xb4 30.cxb5 ♟xb5 31.♟d1 a4 32.♟e3 axb3 33.axb3



33...♟xe5 Finally the weakie at e5 falls.

34.♟h4 ♟b6 35.f4 ♟xg4 36.♟ed3 ♟f6 37.f5 gxf5 38.♟g5 ♟d5 39.♟g3 f4 40.♟f3 ♟a6 41.♟c1 ♟c8+

White resigned ■

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FRESH LEAVES 6 from the BOOKSHELF

by **FM CARSTEN HANSEN**

Carsten Hansen is a FIDE Master and chess enthusiast residing in Bayonne, New Jersey. He has written twelve books, mostly on openings, the most recent *The Sicilian Dragon – move by move* (Everyman Chess 2016). From 2000 to 2014, he wrote the book review column, Checkpoint at chesscafe.com. You can find his blog on all areas of chess at carstenchess.com.

10 NOTEWORTHY BOOKS



- 01 125 Chess Opening Surprises**  ★★★★★
by Graham Burgess (Gambit Publications 2017)
- 02 The King Is a Powerful Piece**  ★★★★★
by Tigran Gyozyan (Mongoose Press 2017)
- 03 The Queen's Gambit Declined – Move by Move**  ★★★★★
by Nigel Davies (Everyman Chess 2017)
- 04 Play 1...d6 Against Everything**  ★★★★★
by Erik Zude and Joerg Hickl (New In Chess 2017)
- 05 One Pawn Saves the Day**  ★★★★★
by Sergei Tkachenko (Elk & Ruby 2017)
- 06 Team Tal – An Inside Story**  ★★★★★
by Valentin Kirillov (Elk & Ruby 2017)
- 07 Dismantling the Sicilian – A Complete Modern Repertoire for White**  ★★★★★
by Jesus de la Villa Garcia and Max Illingworth (New In Chess 2017)
- 08 Opening Repertoire – The Modern Samisch**  ★★★★★
by Eric Montany (Everyman Chess 2017)
- 09 The Magic of Chess Tactics 2 – Intuition, Imagination and Precision**  ★★★★★
by Claus Dieter Meyer and Karsten Mueller (Russell Enterprises 2017)
- 10 Bishop Endings – An Innovative Course**  ★★★★★
by Efstratios Grivas (Thinkers Publishing 2017)

Before we move on to the above-mentioned books I want to share a few thoughts with you the reader. While being a chess book reviewer is one of my joys in life – after all, as a lover of chess books, who would not appreciate receiving books from eager publishers and authors? – it is also one of the more stressful tasks I undertake.

Which books should be part of the next column? Which books will the reader most enjoy hearing about? Which books will be most relevant to the reader of this magazine? What are the demographics for readers of this magazine in terms of strength, book-buying habits etc? Should books from major chess publishers receive preferential treatment over those that are published by smaller outfits or even self-published by the author? What about e-books and digital products, are they less or more important than printed books, and how should they be weighted in comparison with traditional materials?

When I wrote the first couple of articles, I received books sporadically and often ended up going to bookstores or online to find books

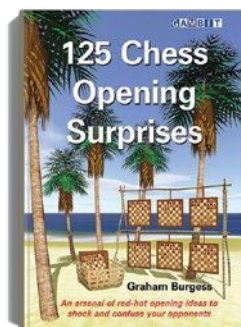
that attracted my curiosity. Now, however, the books are coming in a torrent that makes it a lot more complicated to make the right choices. Ten books are covered in this article, but another thirty or more came under consideration for inclusion. Therefore, I'm doing two things:

- I will encourage you, the reader, to tell me if you have bought a recent book that has not yet been covered in this column, but which you like or even love a lot, and I will then decide whether to include it in an upcoming issue. My e-mail address is: carstenchess@gmail.com
- I have a website called carstenchess.com, which, quite frankly, I haven't maintained, despite earlier great ambitions. But now I'm in the process of updating it and will feature there all the books that did not make it into this column. This will give you an opportunity to see an even broader picture of what is going on in chess publishing today, as well as help to serve those authors and publishers who produce excellent material, some of which deserve to find the right audience but have a hard time doing so.

01 125 Chess Opening Surprises

by Graham Burgess

MSRP \$ 21.95



Back in 1998, in the early days of Gambit Publications, a series of “101” books were published: 101 Chess Opening Traps, “101 Brilliant Chess Miniatures” and

“101 Chess Opening Surprises”. The latter was written Gambit’s Editorial Director, Graham Burgess. While some may not be that familiar with Graham’s work, his output in recent years has become considerably less than it was

back then, and I can only recall two recent titles “A Cunning Chess Opening Repertoire” and “Chess Openings for Kids”, the latter co-authored with John Watson. While both books are very good, they are hardly of the type that knock your socks off. However, back then his books were deep dives into a variety of openings, including the King’s Indian, Torre Attack and Alekhine Defense, to mention only a few.

In addition, Graham expertly edited all of Gambit’s books, which, in the name of full disclosure, included four of my own – two on the English Opening, one on the Nimzo-Indian and another entitled “Improve Your Positional Chess”. I might add, especially with regard to the first three, he improved them and made them more succinct by asking me to re-examine a lot of the analysis and

assessments, and even leave some of the material on the cutting room floor. For this, to put it mildly, I am eternally grateful.

Returning to the present title, in the introduction Graham tells us that when Gambit launched their Chess Studio app (which by the way is an excellent product for those who prefer e-books over regular books but, as far as I know, is so far limited to Gambit’s own titles) the original version of this book was supposed to be included as one of the first titles, albeit with a minor update of the material on each of the “surprises”.

However, once he started going over the material, he realized that the task was much bigger than expected and the need for a full-blown thorough revision was called for.

The result of the author’s efforts is this book, and it is an enjoyable,

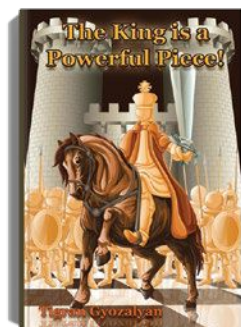
fun read. Some of the original ideas found a bigger audience, to the point that some lines went from surprises to “what is expected” in certain lines. Nevertheless, the book is jam-packed with interesting analysis and ideas, some of which can be used as part of a repertoire, while others are much more difficult to implement because of the rarity of the opening and/or the suspect nature of the actual idea.

The author has also added some new surprises to the original 101, some of which will surely find a following, others perhaps less so.

Overall, I truly enjoyed this book and recommend it to those who are happy to do a little work on their openings and perhaps also take a walk on the wild side.

02 The King Is a Powerful Piece by Tigran Gyozyalyan

MSRP \$ 19.95



This is a book I would very much love to like. The premise is to give examples of extraordinary usage of the king. The material is

divided into eight chapters:

- 1) The Aggressive King;
- 2) The Active King;
- 3) The King Finds a Safe Haven;
- 4) Evacuating the King ahead of Your Opponent's Attack;
- 5) Removing the King Ahead of Your Own Attack;
- 6) The King Protects Weaknesses;
- 7) The King Facilitates Major Piece Coordination;
- 8) Giving Up Castling Voluntarily.

I recall the subject being covered within a single chapter in various

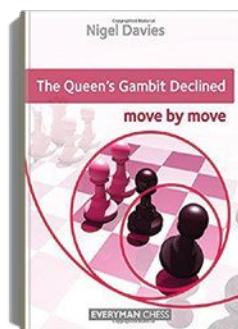
books, for instance by Dvoretsky, but only once, as far as I'm aware, has a full volume been devoted to this subject and that was “King Power in Chess” by Edmar Mednis, published nearly forty years ago. To my mind, such a scarcity of previous material always puts pressure on an author to do an exceptional job. Well, the author has most certainly done that with regard to assembling the material, but in my opinion less so in its presentation.

Many moves are left without commentary, even if they form part of the concept under consideration as well as its execution. To call it a database dump is too harsh but the author would have done better to annotate all the chosen examples in greater detail, spelling out why a particular position was chosen and what made it remarkable, while providing analysis to explain and support the underlying ideas. Though in some cases he does do this, far too often he doesn't, thereby omitting what is a crucial component of any instructional manual.

So overall a great concept with excellent material, but somewhat disappointing in its delivery.

03 The Queen's Gambit Declined - Move by move by Nigel Davies

MSRP \$ 27.95



Everyman's move by move series almost seems never-ending, one title after another is pumped out on all sorts of openings and players. In

fact I have even written two of these books myself: one on the Dragon, one on the Closed Sicilian and, to be

published later this year, one more on the ♠b5 Sicilian. Most of the books in the series are good, while several are really excellent. All have the same Q & A games based format, where an imaginary student asks the author/coach questions and receives instructive answers. However, the end result varies considerably from author to author, some of whom are chatty and jokey with a relaxed conversational style, while others are more to the point, sticking strictly to chess itself. I must say that I enjoy both approaches as long as the quality of the material is maintained. That is most definitely the case with the present book. The author, grandmaster Nigel Davies, is both an experienced author and an excellent coach and this shines through in both the content and presentation.

Personally, I have found the Queen's Gambit Declined too strategically complex for average players to play with competence and understanding. Some of the underlying ideas are truly headscratchers if not explained properly. Therefore, it is virtually impossible to master this opening on your own, as is very much the case with the main line Ruy Lopez. You can memorize the theory and the standard maneuvers, but in most cases you will end up with positions that are of such a technical or strategical nature, and so difficult to navigate, that you might as well not attempt to tackle them in the first place. However, this book breaks new ground in that it digs well beneath the surface and explains things in a way that is both enjoyable and instructive. Several times while going through the book, I thought “aha”, “well put” and on a couple of occasions I even felt I had walked away having learned something that I didn't know before. That doesn't happen often when I read books designed for an audience that is well below my normal level of play. Nigel Davies is not heavy on theory, he

merely scratches the surface, which is quite different from my approach in this series. However, he has made a fine selection of main games, some accompanied by theoretical examples to demonstrate alternative principal lines of play, and dug in deep with explanations. This makes the book perfect for those who are not that familiar with the opening or those who have played it for a while but lack the ability to join up all the dots between acquired theoretical knowledge and application of appropriate ideas and plans in over-the-board play.

04 Play 1...d6 Against Everything

by Erik Zude and Joerg Hickl

MSRP \$ 24.95



The days of “play this opening to win” books are long since over, as chess players now seem well aware that life isn’t that easy or

uncomplicated. While repertoire books as such haven’t entirely disappeared, nowadays they seem much more in-depth and therefore typically cover multiple volumes. Bearing that in mind, this book makes quite a refreshing change. Two strong players from Germany, Grandmaster Hickl and International Master Zude, present an opening repertoire for Black based on 1...d6, which is undoubtedly the most flexible move on the board as it can lead to a wide variety of interesting positions.

This same topic was also attempted with some success by the Finnish duo of Yrjola and Tellain

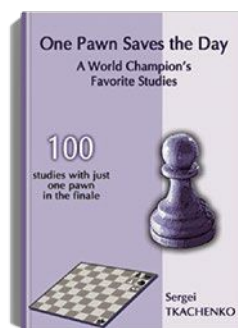
in their book “An Explosive Chess Opening Repertoire for Black”, way back in 2001. The present book is based on a repertoire that includes the Philidor (1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♖f6 3.♗c3 e5) and Old Indian (1.d4 d6 2.♗f3 ♖f6 3.c4 ♗bd7 4.♗c3 e5) against White’s principal first moves, and ...d6 and ...e5 against everything else. I was a little surprised by the choice of the former, especially the use of the Antoshin Variation (with an early exchange by Black on d4) which I have long considered rather suspect, but the authors have managed to demonstrate a good way to play it as Black. While the book may seem fairly lightweight, considering that it provides a complete repertoire for Black, it is in fact surprisingly thorough, covering anything of relevance by means of both detailed variations and plentiful explanations.

I can easily see this becoming the go-to-guide for club players who are turned off by massive opening books and just want a straightforward and easy to learn opening repertoire.

05 One Pawn Saves the Day

by Sergei Tkachenko

MSRP \$ 11.99



I heard about this book well before I actually saw a copy – and it had me interested, right from the get-go. I must admit that one of the

many flaws in my chess education was that I never cared much for studies. Somehow I had come to the conclusion that their relevance to practical play was limited and not something on which I should spend

too much time. Even when I learned that Dvoretsky used them in his training, it didn’t really change my views. However, when working with my compatriot Silas Lund on some educational material, my resistance started to give way. Not only were the studies relevant, they were also compelling – just like chess puzzle books, except deeper, more textured and often profoundly entertaining with many surprising “aha” moments by way of conclusion.

If you are not yet into studies, then this pocket-sized book – and it does indeed fit into just about any pocket – may be just the introduction you need to a whole new world.

It is in fact the first in a series of “[piece] saves the day”, featuring a collection of 100 endgame studies that all have one thing in common – one pawn or piece (depending on the particular title) remains on the board and either secures the win or saves the draw.

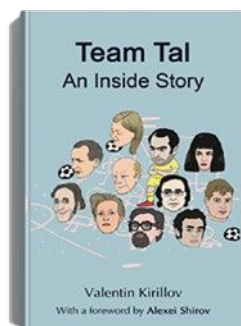
Each study has been selected by Sergei Tkachenko, who will probably be unknown to most readers but was a member of the Ukrainian team that won the 5th World Chess Composition Tournament in 1997 (and came second in 2000, 2004, 2013 and 2017). Needless to say, he knows his stuff.

You are presented with one study at a time, where you are given the task “White to move and win” or “White to move and draw”. The solutions are relatively short, typically six moves or fewer, and you already know that you have to find a solution where White has only one pawn left and that pawn “saves the day”.

I have found myself reading the books in this series just about anywhere and anytime – on my commute to work, in my lunch break, in the bathroom, while waiting for my better half to finish her shopping, etc. One of these books is always by my side. So if you enjoy studies, or are curious about studies, but haven’t yet got around to looking at them, this series will be just right for you.

06 Team Tal – An Inside Story by Valentin Kirillov

MSRP \$ 13.99



The author, Valentin Kirillov, will probably not be known to the average westerner, but he was a good friend of the late World Champion,

Mikhail Tal. Kirillov also served as his second up to 1976, after which he was blamed for Tal's failure to qualify for the Candidates, after losing out in a three-way play-off to Petrosian and Portisch, with the latter making it through instead of Tal. Sadly, Kirillov passed away in 2017, before the publication of his book.

The story is a personal one, both an ode to the former world champion and to the relationship between the two of them. It paints a picture of what went on behind closed doors, Tal's victories, celebrations, defeats, disappointments, frustrations and much more. It is a quick read, only about 150 pages, which, coincidentally, I got through at the same time as this year's Tal Memorial was taking place in Moscow.

While I enjoyed becoming acquainted with a different side to Tal, looking at private photos and various artifacts depicting him, I can't help feeling a sense of dismay as to what went on in the Soviet Union, even in the treatment of a champion like Tal. For example, he was asked to take certain pills given to astronauts to enhance their brain power, but doing so without the knowledge of Tal's doctor. There was also the issue of a match between Tal and Korchnoi, where the latter complained about the presence of Tal's doctor, thereby eerily resembling the controversy

surrounding the 1978 Karpov vs. Korchnoi title match, held in the presence of the world champion's parapsychologist.

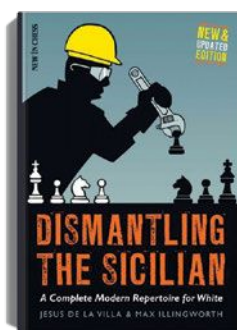
While the book discusses chess in general at some length, it doesn't contain any games or tournament and match reports, and I think that is a mistake. Furthermore, I'm not too sure about the value of the interviews/mini-biographies of other Latvian players who were inspired by Tal or whose lives had a direct or passing involvement in his life.

For hardcore Tal fans, however, this book is an interesting read, but for the rest of us, it may be less fulfilling. That said, I'm happy to see this book published in English.

07 Dismantling the Sicilian – Second and Updated Edition: A Complete Modern Repertoire for White

by Jesus de la Villa Garcia and Max Illingworth

MSRP \$ 29.95



The original edition of this book appeared in 2009 and was notable for the fact that Spanish Grandmaster De la Villa Garcia provided in a

single tome what other writers needed several volumes for – a repertoire for White against the Open Sicilian and one which offers the first player excellent winning chances without having to memorize more theory than is possible to absorb for the average human being.

Fast forward eight years, after which many of the original ideas have

been tried, implemented as standard theory, or simply not proven to be as effective as once thought. Therefore the repertoire needed to be infused with a battery of new ideas, new tweaks and a sharpening of several lines.

For some reason that is not clear to me, De la Villa has not produced this updated version himself but instead handed over the project to Australian Grandmaster Max Illingworth and I must say that I find his update truly excellent and worthwhile in that it freshens and sharpens De la Villa's original repertoire to make it suitable for present day usage.

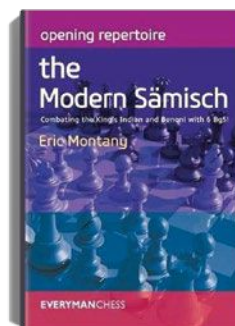
In addition to the customary chapters covering the various lines of play, Max has chosen to include a chapter "What Others Recommend... and why I disagree" which is a thought-provoking look at lines covered, for example, by Grandmaster Negi in his three-volume work on the Sicilian – from White's perspective.

Throughout the book, many novelties and improvements on existing theory have been added, yet this hefty, well-analyzed 360-page repertoire against the Sicilian remains manageable and workable even for average players.

08 Opening Repertoire – The Modern Samisch

by Eric Montany

MSRP \$ 29.95



The Modern Samisch is the line where White plays ♠g5 instead of ♠e3 in the Samisch. I cannot recall seeing this featured in any repertoire book

for White in recent years, so a modern

treatment is definitely overdue.

While I had never previously heard of the author, USCF National Master Eric Montany, I'm thoroughly impressed by his work, which is very well structured, detailed in terms of variations, and generous in terms of explanations. On every page the author's passion for the opening shines through, but in such a way as his assessments never become ridiculous when making claims regarding the value of a given line or move. On the contrary, his judgments remain finely balanced and honest.

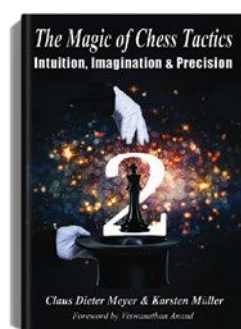
The format is based on main games with the theory and explanations neatly contained within the very detailed annotations.

For the average to strong club player, this book and its selected lines of play should serve you well for several years to come.

09 The Magic of Chess Tactics 2 – Intuition, Imagination and Precision

by Claus Dieter Meyer and Karsten Mueller

MSRP \$ 24.95



Back in 2002, the authors wrote the original volume, *The Magic of Chess Tactics*, which I enjoyed at the time even though I can't remember

much about it now. The basis for this volume was a DVD-Rom with the same title, published by ChessBase.

The authors should be well-known, particularly Mueller who is pretty much the world's leading authority on practical endgame play, with dozens of books and DVDs to his credit on

just that one department of the game. Furthermore, he has penned several interesting books on other chess topics too.

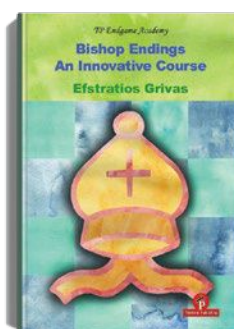
I struggled a bit with my feelings as to what rating I should give this book. Qualitatively it is top notch since the games are analyzed in detail, sometimes excruciatingly so, the examples are well-chosen and the exercises complex and interesting. Yet, I cannot bring myself to love this book. We all know the expression "database dump" and although the authors' work is definitely not that, you occasionally get the "engine feeling", for example on pages 12-13 there are three diagrams and a ton of analysis but almost no words, making this segment virtually impossible to enjoy because it is just line after line after line of analysis.

Thankfully, the whole book isn't as unappetizing as that. In fact it contains excellent material for countless hours of study. However I must say that its high level really makes it only suitable for rather strong or very ambitious players, as the average chess enthusiast will find it simply overwhelming.

10 Bishop Endings – An Innovative Course

by Efstratios Grivas

MSRP \$ 28.95



This volume is another ambitious release by Thinkers Publishing. In it Grandmaster and FIDE Senior Trainer Grivas goes over bishop

endgames in more detail than any previous book I have ever read on

the subject. The result is a very authoritative and profound work from which I personally learned a great deal and I believe any serious student of the endgame will walk away with the same feeling. Particularly the chapter on bishop vs pawns was an eye opener for me. However, I have a few reservations:

The book is called a 'course', but it might perhaps be better described as 'encyclopedic coverage' of thoroughly analyzed bishop endgames. However there are sixteen challenging exercises at the end of the book with particularly detailed solutions.

The annotations to the games are top heavy with variations, which is understandable and not entirely avoidable. However, there could have been a lot more commentary and explanation as to why certain moves are being played, what the objectives are for each side in this or that position, what the attacker should aim for and what the defender should avoid and try to achieve. This is often forgotten and so readers are left with the task of figuring out all these things themselves.

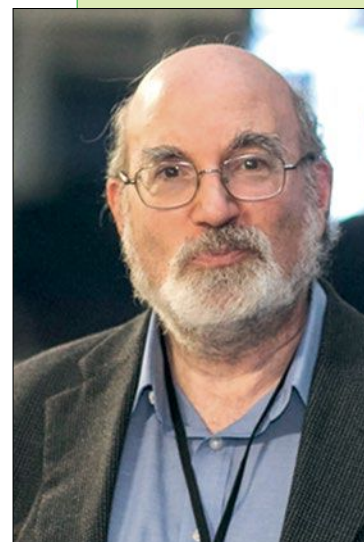
In the bibliography, the author gives rather lengthy credit to Dvoretsky and examples from his book "Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual". From the wording the impression is gained that he has quoted variations at length and move by move and only changed "a few words according to my own taste". This of course begs the question: how many examples from Dvoretsky were included and are they individually and properly credited? I found some, but don't know if I picked up all of them. However, I think the author could easily have made these references clear to the reader.

Nevertheless, this is a very good book and, though quite advanced, should find a sizeable audience among ambitious players.

Ten Mostly Tech Tips For Correspondence Players

I HOPE THAT YOU WILL INDULGE A COLUMN ABOUT TEN TECH TIPS FOR SERIOUS CORRESPONDENCE PLAYERS. THESE TIPS ARE IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE AND SO, CONSIDER FOR A MOMENT YOUR HIGHEST CHESS PRIORITIES.

by JON EDWARDS



Jon Edwards is an ICCF Senior International Master living in Pennington, NJ. He won the 10th US Championship and is now competing in the World Correspondence Candidates. He has written more than 40 chess books, notably *The Chess Analyst* (1999), *Sacking the Citadel* (2010), and *ChessBase Complete* (2014). He is regular columnist for *Chess Life for Kids*. His web site, *Chess is Fun*, provides free chess instruction.

Every player will have their own approach, but I suspect that there must be some curiosity regarding how highly ranked correspondence players (at least this one) pursue their craft. After all, there must be some reason why all correspondence players do not have the same rating as the engines they use. Some players are actually still winning, and that may have something to do with their tools and how they use them.

1 Secure your power

TIP Technology's disruption of chess necessitates that chess players obtain at least some rudimentary understanding of the technical infrastructure.

The top priority? Get an in-home generator that guarantees that you will NEVER lose power. If an outage occurs, and in my neighborhood, that's at least once a month, the generator kicks in with gas-powered electricity. The computers upon which I rely for my long term processing are all connected to a reliable UPS (uninterruptible power supply) that provides the power that bridges between the outage and the kicking in of the generator.

Note that buying a UPS, even a very good one, but not a generator, will not

secure your power. The UPS will give you only enough time to power down your computer safely. It will protect you against the more frequent short outages, but anything longer than 10 minutes will put an abrupt end to your long computer runs.

Avoid this tip at your peril. You will be unlikely to restart a computer run knowing that it will take 4-5 days just to return to where you were.

Note to ChessBase and engine developers: It sure would be nice were it possible to save runs (automatically would be very nice) after a few days and be able to return to that computational state of affairs at a later time!

2 Obtain at least one very powerful machine

TIP My laptop is roughly three times faster than my old desktop computer. My relatively new desktop is roughly three times faster than my laptop. It is running an Intel Xeon CPU E5-2687W v4 @ 3.00 GHz with 32 GB of memory. If you are running on a tight budget, sacrifice a bit in memory although, I appreciate being able to load a TableBase into memory when I load ChessBase. I also find that having more memory tends to eliminate issues with saving files when



Name	Provider	Experience	Machine	Nation	Curren...	MM/s	Speed	Thread...	Cores	Likes	Fix Rate	Max Fix Time	Booking...	Waiting	Author	Let's C
asmFishW_2017	rechenschieb	★★★★★	Dual Xeon E5-2696 v4, 64GB	DE	0.70	117.30	2.85 GHz	44 + 4096i	44/88(2)	0	0.70	600 min	0.00	-	TypingALot	285
asmFishW_2017	rechenschieb	★★★★★	Dual Xeon E5-2696 v4, 64GB	DE	0.72	114.43	2.90 GHz	44 + 8192i	44/88(2)	0	0.72	600 min	0.00	-	TypingALot	279
Houdini 6 Pro x	rechenschieb	★★★★★	Dual Xeon E5-2696 v3, 32GB	DE	0.45	111.56	2.90 GHz	36 + 4096i	36/72(2)	3	0.45	600 min	0.00	-	Robert Houdart	243
asmFishW_2017	rechenschieb	★★★★★	Dual Xeon E5-2696 v4, 64GB	DE	0.69	109.35	2.80 GHz	44 + 8192i	44/88(2)	0	0.69	600 min	0.00	-	TypingALot	309
asmFishW_2017	mely	★★★★★	Intel Xeon Gold 6146, 32GB	DE	0.19	87.91	3.87 GHz	96 + 7372i	48/48(4)	0	0.20	14400 min	0.00	In use	TypingALot	105
asmFishW_2017	rechenschieb	★★★★★	Dual Xeon E5-2696 v3, 64GB	DE	0.39	86.58	2.80 GHz	36 + 8192i	36/72(2)	1	0.39	600 min	0.00	-	TypingALot	203
asmFishW_2017	rechenschieb	★★★★★	Dual Xeon E5-2696 v3, 64GB	DE	0.40	86.20	2.80 GHz	36 + 4096i	36/72(2)	0	0.40	600 min	0.00	-	TypingALot	268
asmFishW 2018	elofant	★★★★★	Dual Xeon E5-2697 v4, 32GB	DE	0.28	77.33	2.80 GHz	72 + 4096i	36/72(2)	1	0.28	6000 min	0.00	-	TypingALot	114
Houdini 6 Pro x	rechenschieb	★★★★★	AMD Ryzen Threadripper 1950X 16-Core, 32GB	DE	0.15	73.28	3.80 GHz	16 + 2048i	16/32(1)	0	0.15	600 min	0.00	-	Robert Houdart	184
Stockfish 11111	mely	★★★★★	Intel Xeon E5-2698 v4, 32GB	DE	0.12	72.53	2.65 GHz	40 + 1024i	40/80(4)	2	0.15	14400 min	0.00	In use	T. Romstad, M.	253
Houdini 6.03 Pr	rechenschieb	★★★★★	Intel Core i9-7940X, 32GB	DE	0.14	70.60	4.20 GHz	14 + 2048i	14/28(1)	0	0.14	600 min	0.00	-	Robert Houdart	191
asmFishW_2017	rechenschieb	★★★★★	Dual Xeon E5-2696 v2, 64GB	DE	0.19	59.49	3.10 GHz	24 + 4096i	24/48(2)	2	0.19	600 min	0.00	-	TypingALot	207
asmFishW_2017	rechenschieb	★★★★★	Dual Xeon E5-2696 v2, 64GB	DE	0.20	58.51	3.10 GHz	24 + 4096i	24/48(2)	1	0.20	600 min	0.00	In use	TypingALot	184
asmFishW_2017	rechenschieb	★★★★★	Quad Xeon E5-4650, 32GB	DE	0.22	57.67	2.90 GHz	32 + 2048i	32/64(4)	3	0.22	600 min	0.00	-	TypingALot	233
Houdini 6.03 Pr	kampfhandw	★★★★★	AMD Ryzen Threadripper 1950X 16-Core OC, 16GB	DE	0.07	49.02	4.10 GHz	32 + 8192i	16/32(1)	0	0.07	600 min	0.00	-	Robert Houdart	97
asmFishW_2017	rechenschieb	★★★★★	Dual Xeon E5-2689, 32GB	DE	0.11	41.94	3.30 GHz	16 + 2048i	16/32(2)	2	0.11	600 min	0.00	-	TypingALot	180
asmFishW_2017	rechenschieb	★★★★★	Dual Xeon E5-2690, 64GB	DE	0.12	41.60	3.30 GHz	16 + 4096i	16/32(2)	1	0.12	600 min	0.00	-	TypingALot	180
Komodo 11.01 i	rechenschieb	★★★★★	Dual Xeon E5-2693 v2, 32GB	DE	0.21	38.66	2.50 GHz	28 + 2048i	28/56(2)	3	0.21	600 min	0.00	-	Don Dailey, Lar	180
asmFishW 2018	elofant	★★★★★	Intel Core i7-8700K @ 4600 MHz, 16GB	DE	0.04	31.20	4.60 GHz	12 + 2048i	6/12(1)	0	0.04	6000 min	0.00	-	TypingALot	97
Houdini 6.02 Pr	hasparov1	★★★★★	Intel Xeon X5680, 32GB	DE	0.05	26.79	3.47 GHz	24 + 1638i	12/24(2)	2	0.05	60 min	0.00	-	Robert Houdart	93
Stockfish 9 64 P	chessman2b	★★★★★	Intel Xeon X5675, 48GB	DE	0.04	25.32	3.06 GHz	24 + 2800i	24/24(2)	0	0.04	6000 min	0.00	-	T. Romstad, M.	163
Stockfish 9 64 P	alneyadi	★★★★★	Intel Xeon E5-2687W v2, 128GB	DE	Free	23.37	3.09 GHz	16 + 6553i	16/32(2)	1	0.30	60 min	Free	-	T. Romstad, M.	180
Houdini 6.03 Pr	tdunbug	★★★★★	Intel Xeon E5-2695 v2, 64GB	DE	0.01	21.94	2.40 GHz	24 + 1228i	24/48(2)	13	0.30	60 min	0.00	In use	Robert Houdart	153
asmFishW_2017	deeeep xp	★★★★★	Intel Xeon X5650, 8GB	DE	0.02	20.21	4.40 GHz	12 + 3072i	6/12(1)	2	0.02	60 min	0.00	-	TypingALot	99
asmFishW_2017	oregon_knigh	★★★★★	AMD Ryzen 7 1800X Eight-Core, 16GB	DE	0.03	20.02	3.84 GHz	16 + 6144i	8/16(1)	0	0.04	7777 min	0.00	-	TypingALot	187
asmFishW_2018	mhsansen23	★★★★★	Intel Xeon E5620, 8GB	DE	0.01	15.59	2.39 GHz	13 + 6144i	8/16(2)	1	0.03	600 min	0.00	In use	TypingALot	68
Stockfish 9 64 P	nj_greg	★★★★★	Intel Xeon E5-2620 v4, 16GB	DE	0.02	15.36	2.10 GHz	16 + 4096i	16/32(2)	1	0.05	60 min	0.00	-	T. Romstad, M.	153
asmFishW_2017	hasparov1	★★★★★	AMD FX-8350 Eight-Core, 6GB	DE	0.01	12.69	4.00 GHz	8 + 1024i	8/8(1)	0	0.01	60 min	0.00	In use	TypingALot	126
Komodo 11.2.2	tdunbug	★★★★★	Intel Xeon E5-2695 v2, 32GB	DE	Free	11.87	2.40 GHz	24 + 8192i	12/24(1)	2	0.30	60 min	Free	-	Don Dailey, Lar	65
Houdini 6.03 Pr	aku1gm	★★★★★	AMD FX-8350 Eight-Core, 8GB	DE	0.01	11.55	4.01 GHz	8 + 6144i	8/8(1)	4	0.01	6000 min	0.00	In use	Robert Houdart	133
Stockfish 05111	mhsansen23	★★★★★	Intel Xeon E5620, 8GB	DE	0.01	10.51	2.39 GHz	13 + 6144i	8/16(2)	4	0.02	600 min	0.00	In use	T. Romstad, M.	73
Komodo 11.2.2	doctor smart	★★★★★	Intel Core i7-4770, 16GB	DE	0.01	9.30	3.40 GHz	8 + 4096i	4/8(1)	4	0.03	6000 min	0.00	In use	Don Dailey, Lar	82

01 A list of the engines that are available for use, sorted by computer clock speed. As you can see, many are already in use as I write this. Know that, over time, renting an engine can get quite expensive. The minute rate is generally proportional to the power of the computer. You can rent them, provide your own engine for use by the chess community, or even place your own engine there for your own private use while travelling.

annotations get very, very lengthy.

If you cannot afford to acquire a very powerful machine, you might instead consider taking full advantage of the Cloud engines provided by ChessBase.

ANALYSIS ► OPEN CLOUD ENGINES

SEE PHOTO

01

TIP 3 Be efficient with your computing resources

Over-the-board, we learn how to manage time. In correspondence chess, we must learn to manage our computing time. If you only have one machine, you may find that the demands upon it will overwhelm the hardware.

I reserve my most powerful machine for lengthy runs. I reserve my laptop for the recording and testing of lines. I use my slower, backup machine for testing candidate moves that seem obvious.

Do not rely upon a single run, regardless of its depth, for clarity. Test the lines generated by your lengthy analysis

by running an engine upon the results. I find that backtracking from the end of the line towards the beginning of the line produces the best results because most engines retain the existing, forward-looking results in memory as you retreat backward through the line.

Record everything: every run, every move, every evaluation. ChessBase makes it easy. Within the engine results, you can right-click on a line (or all lines) and add them to your analysis. That makes for some repetitive and bulky files, but you can reorganize the lines with => Insert => Clean Up Variations.

The entire methodology takes time, a lot of time. Some of that time is away from the machine, but most of it places you in front of a computer monitor. If you tie up a machine with a long run, it may be unavailable for the many more tasks, even the process of sending out moves with the care that process deserves.

TIP 4 Stay current...

Correspondence chess is not simply a computer exercise. Subscribe to the Informants and to the New in Chess Yearbooks. Play through as many recent annotated games as you can find. If at all possible, stay current

with recent tournament games. Above all, play through every win that emerges in the monthly updates in the ICCF Archive. The ChessBase motto, "Wissen ist Matt" has nothing to do with checkmates. It translates to: "Knowledge is Power."

TIP 5 If you value your sanity, limit your game load

Years ago, when my rating grew, I found myself flattered by all the tournament invitations I received. Stupidly, I accepted almost all of them, with the result that my game load grew to more than 50 games at the same time. Today, I will not play more than 20. If you want to do justice to the sport, give your full attention to a more limited number of games. And that way, you might also be able to find time for your loved ones. Remember them?

TIP 6 Peruse Livebook and Let's Check

The ChessBase LiveBook is without question the largest opening book in the world. It records every move of every willing user. You can disconnect, as I often do, but that becomes somewhat burdensome,



connecting when you want to view the recorded information, then disconnecting to hide your own work. The fact is that most people remain connected, with the result that lines at the cutting edge of theory are fully represented here. On many occasions, I have found very unusual and interesting opening ideas with this tool.

For advanced users, open LiveBook with => View => Livebook so that the tool does not dominate your work space. Unless you disconnect, Let's Check displays the results of computer runs in the position on screen. With it, you can avoid wasting time and electricity on long runs whose results are already recorded.

SEE PHOTO

02

TIP 7 The ICCF Games Archive

In my last column, I noted that the International Correspondence Chess Federation (ICCF) maintains a Game Archive at www.iccf.com. You do not need to be a correspondence player to gain access. Simply join the ICCF and a day or so later, you will be able to download the database. Pay special attention to any and all wins there. The serious players among you will download new games at the end of every month. Some manic correspondence players schedule lengthy vacations at the

beginning of every event in order to take in this new monthly data.

Alternatively, you can simply purchase the Correspondence Chess database from ChessBase. Unfortunately, the database is released every other year making it out-of-date very soon after its release. Some of the games are annotated, but having a fully up-to-date database is key.

TIP 8 Investigate Similar Structures

Recent versions of ChessBase make it trivially easy to locate and then play through similarly structured games or similar endgames.

=> Report => Similar Structures (or Similar Endgames)

I make this a regular part of my investigation and, I find that I often learn more by playing through a dozen or so similar positions than I would by letting the engines run a bit longer.

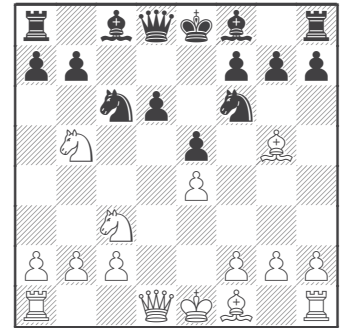
TIP 9 Know your opponents

The ICCF provides pairings a month before play must commence. Take that month seriously. All completed games in the ICCF are placed in its Game Archive and so it's possible to forecast exactly where the game is likely to go. But pursue this investigation thoroughly, playing over every one of your opponents' games.

I am primarily an 1.e4 player, but I will open 1.d4 if an opponent regularly plays a defense that appears to contain a flaw.

TIP 10 Take extraordinary care when sending moves

There are so many stories of careless moves throwing away a game. After 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e5 6.♘db5 d6 7.♘g5



...one correspondence opponent played 7...h6 rather than 7...a6.

I suspect that he entered the wrong move carelessly, certainly not flipping the board and comparing the position with his notes. Needless to say, he resigned soon after 8.♙xf6 with the threat of 9.♘d5.

Before you send a move, verify that the board position is exactly the same as the position you have been analyzing. It doesn't take long, and it can save you from a really bad day. ■

02

LiveBook results in a line in the Sveshnikov. 21...bc6 has been "visited" most often, 744 of the time, and carries an "=" evaluation. The date shows that this main line has been examined more recently than the other alternatives, a clear indication of recent interest.

LiveBook							
Disconnect Settings Shop							
Move	Games	Result	Elo-Av	Date	Evaluation	Visits	[%]
21...Bc6	3	33%	2690	2018-Jan-23	=	1309	74
21...a3	1	50%	2751	2014	±	289	16
21...Qd6	0	-	-	2016	---	84	5
21...Bg4	0	-	-	2013	=	65	4
21...Be6	0	-	-	2016	---	31	2

Confession Time

WHETHER USING BOARDS OR NOT, CHESS IS JUST BETTER WHEN IT'S PLAYED IN PERSON, FACING OFF AGAINST ANOTHER HUMAN BEING. WHERE'S DANNY AND WHO IS THIS IMPOSTER?

by IM DANNY RENSCH

As the CCO of the world's largest chess website, it is, quite literally, my job to convince you of the opposite – and I spend most of my days devising plans and designing features to make playing and learning chess online, as much fun, as serious, and feel as “real” as playing chess “over the board”. So have I failed? Am I admitting defeat? Not quite.

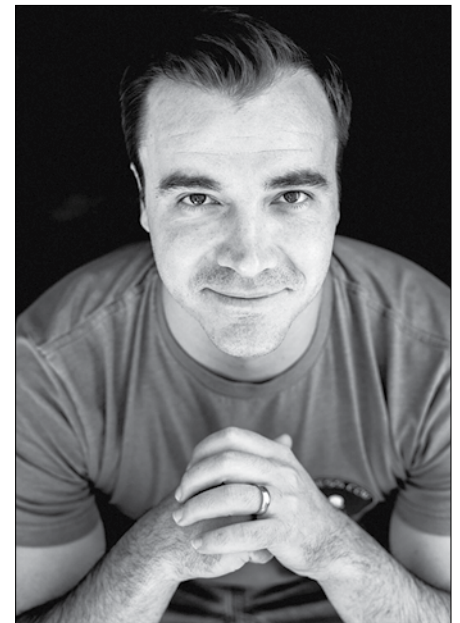
Over the weekend of April 7th and 8th, (and possibly by the time you're reading this article) Chess.com and Twitch will host the world's first ever “esport chess championship”: Making the marriage between online chess and classical tournament formats official. In this first event of its kind, the top four teams of the 2018 PRO Chess League season will be flown to San Francisco, paired off... but not over chessboards!

The players will sit across from each other with the same level of intensity, bringing the same amount of home preparation, and fighting with just as

much on the line as any major chess tournament, but instead of shuffling wood, they'll move their pieces the same way they're most comfortable doing so from their home living rooms: with a mouse!

Will this prevent the intense human interaction that accompanies top tier tournaments? We don't think so. Psychological stare downs and nervous walks to checkout your teammates positions will be just as prevalent here as any Olympiad or World Team event, only the players will be glancing at each other over computer monitors instead of across chess boards.

Replacing the board with a computer isn't the only change this event plans to make. Sure, using computers removes the need for DGT boards (since the games are already being played online – fans tuning in from across the world will actually see the moves before the live audience does!) but the biggest difference will be that the players themselves are not to be put in quiet rooms, far away from both commentator and observer. Rather,



they'll be stuck, smack dab at center stage, playing in front of hundreds of cheering fans!

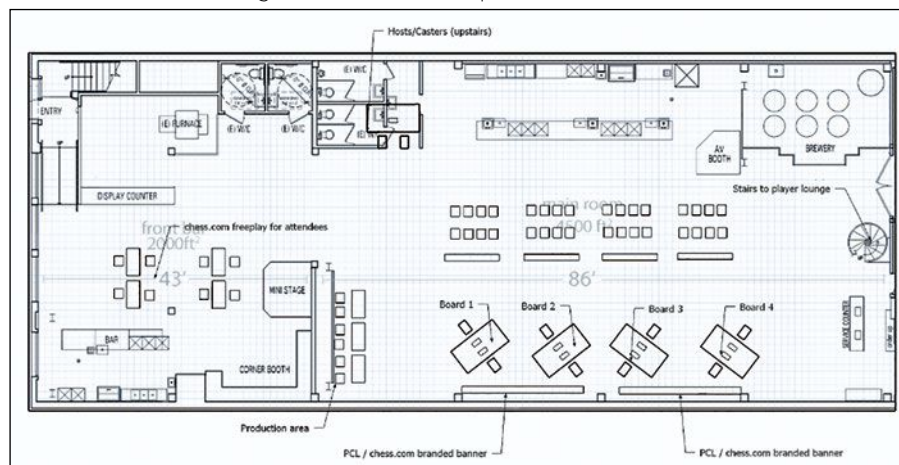
As the floor plan shows, the players are (or were?) no more than 100 feet from a (hopefully) packed restaurant and bar, seated directly below excited commentators in an open, auditorium style building.

They also won't be far from “hang out” areas where fans can play their own games at the Chess.com Freeplay booth, while going back and forth from the main action, perhaps grabbing a beer along the way? Before Emanuel Lasker rolls over in his grave, don't worry, the players will be protected from the racket via noise isolating headphones, and strict security measures, with advanced anti-cheating methods being used to ensure fair play.

But why not try it? Every talented kid who left the game of chess behind in high school, perhaps in hopes of playing a “live action” sport in a stadium, might now look at the game with a different view of the top? Why must we shield our greatest stars from the direct adoration of their fans? Why hide them from the instant love of spectators and commentators after a thrilling match win?

Is this the future? Only time can tell. But it's definitely a part of it. And while I wouldn't argue it offers a better brand of chess, it definitely offers a louder one! ■

▼ 2018 PRO Chess League Final Four: Floor plan of the venue in San Francisco.





MUSINGS of an AMERICAN GRANDMASTER

by GM JOEL BENJAMIN



A Day In The Life Of A Chess Coach

What a phenomenon the Greater New York Scholastics was in 2018! I can't ever recall a tournament spread out over several large ballrooms actually *selling out*. It hits home that scholastics is the bread and butter of American chess. That's why almost everyone who is connected to American chess in a professional capacity is working with young players.

So I was back again in the Columbia Grammar team room in the cozy confines of the Brooklyn Marriott meeting room dubbed "the Navy Yard." It's now the better part of two decades since I began my association with the school. Though my suburban New Jersey dad lifestyle no longer supports teaching classes in NYC, I'm happy to participate as a coach for CGPS at the Cities, States, and Nationals.

I've learned a lot about teaching since my start in the early years of the current century. I learned chess at eight and began to play regularly at ten. Not early at all by today's standards. My "mature" start seemed to save me from a lot of bad habits. I always took my time on my moves, and never had any problems notating a game without errors. I would lose occasionally, but if I was winning big, I would always win. It took me a few years to realize that my childhood experience was not the norm. The one true logic to the games of young children is that there will be big mistakes, and they will be painful.

So I try to emotionally invest less in the results. I know I can't control what happens in the tournament room. I don't follow the standings, and I spend most of the time in the team room, where I educate as many kids as I can. Though Columbia Grammar has produced several high level players (GM Marc Arnold anyone?), their players are concentrated, like most programs, mostly on the younger, lower-rated end of the spectrum. I wouldn't have seen it years ago, but I

am completely comfortable working with these kids. I have put aside my old assumptions and know exactly what to tell them. My teaching skills have become enhanced by becoming a parent myself, which helps me understand their brains and emotions so much better.

Being a parent was the first reason why Sunday, January 6th was a particularly special day.

PROUD PAPA

Aidan is cerebral like his dad, but bigger and stronger than I was. He is as passionate about sports as I was, but participates so much more. With baseball, basketball, and soccer season, he hasn't had much time for chess. He has few competitors in our home town, but has put in time in classes and camp. I'm happy he has a positive attitude towards chess, because I'm in it for the long haul. I thought that by age nine he would

have tried a rated tournament (though he did play an unrated one at camp last summer), but he still might. The GNYCS would have been a tough baptism for him, so I was fine with him not wanting to enter the tournament, but I was excited about bringing him to the team room. I figured he would have a good time playing skittles games and...well, I'm so proud of him I wanted to show him off.

We arrived in the team room before most of the crowd, so I sat down to skittle with Aidan. I could never have imagined what would come out of that game!

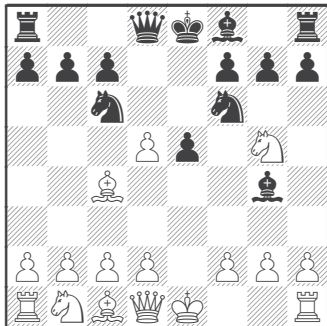
C57

Daddy - Aidan

Skittles, GNYSC Brooklyn 2018

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♖f6 I thought for a moment about suggesting 3...♗c5, but decided to dispense with the lecturing.

4.♘g5 d5 5.exd5 ♗g4!?



"That's what I did against Yannis" he told me, speaking about a game against a friend he had just taught how to play. He meant in a different position of course; I guess it is Aidan's pet method of spiriting away his opponent's queen.

But in the present case...hmmm, it's quite an interesting move. There must be some value in provoking f2-f3, and after 6.f3 ♘a5, Black isn't losing a piece and the position is getting weird.

Columbia Grammar has some impressive firepower in the team room, so I was able to bring in two other grandmasters, Michael Rohde and Marc Arnold, for a consult. I had the feeling that 5...♗g4 would not be objectively correct, but I was fascinated that we all knew nothing of this move, a quite



plausible possibility in a position seen about 20,000 times in the database alone. And it didn't seem easy to refute.

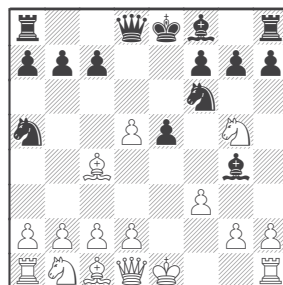
6.f3 ♘a5 7.♗e2 My first thought was that 7.♗b5+ would not be that strong, because 7...♗d7 produces a known position with White having the less-than-useful extra move f2-f3. It's still the move played in seven of 11 database games, but only in the game below did any player have even a decent international rating (Black was 2389): 8.♗e2 ♗d6 9.♘c3 0-0 10.♗xd7 ♗xd7 11.d3 c6 12.dxc6 ♘xc6 13.♖ge4 ♖xe4 14.♖xe4 ♖d4 15.♗f2 ♗e7 16.♗e3 f5 17.♘c3 ♖e6 18.♗xa7 b5 19.♗e3 b4 20.♖e2 f4 21.♗c1 ♗fc8 22.♖d2 b3 23.♘c3 bxc2 24.♖xc2 ♖d4+ 25.♖b1 ♗xc3 26.bxc3 ♗b5+ 27.♗b2 ♗xd3+ 0-1 D.Fernandez - P.Rodriguez, Pedrido 2003.

7...♗f5 8.c4 ♗c5 I talked Aidan out of 8...♗b4?, but didn't direct him to 8...h6! which gives Black a good position.

9.b4 ♗xb4? 10.♗a4+ c6 11.♗xb4 cxd5 12.♘c3 dxc4 13.♗a3 ♘c6 14.♗xb7 ♗b8 15.♗xf7 mate.

The room was filling up with kids, so I thought it might be better to end this and let him pick on someone his own size. But we would return to Aidan's "novelty" throughout the day.

The next time Aidan wanted to look at his move again,

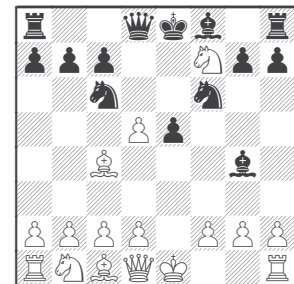


I tried 7.d3. We analyzed 7...♗f5

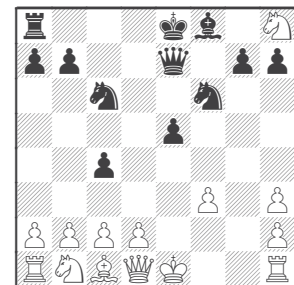
A) 8.♘c3 ♗b4 9.♗d2 ♖xc4 10.dxc4 ♗xc3 11.♗xc3 h6 12.♖e4 (12.♖h3 ♗xh3 13.gxh3 ♖h5) 12...♖xe4 13.fxe4 ♗h4+ 14.♖d2 ♗xe4 with an excellent position for Black. We took it a few moves deeper to practice interesting tactics that arose, with Aidan getting some good practice while feeling like a junior theoretician.

B) At home I investigated 8.♗e2 in this line, but Black is still okay after 8...♖xc4 9.dxc4 h6! 10.♖h3 (10.♗xe5+ ♗e7 11.♗xe7+ ♗xe7 12.♖h3 0-0-0 gives Black a lot of extra tempi for two pawns) and he will probably take one back 10...♗d6 11.♘c3 and while White may be better, it's clearly playable for Black. With the grandmasters we took a look at 7.fxg4 ♖xc4 8.d3 ♖b6 9.c4 ♗c5; and at home 7.♗e2 ♖xc4 8.♗xc4 ♗f5 9.♘c3 ♖d7 10.d4 ♗d6. In both cases White may be better, but it's still nothing of a refutation.

But the computer did point out something quite interesting that had not occurred to the triumvirate: 6.♖xf7!



Now 6...♗d7? 7.dxc6 ♗xc6 8.f3 ♗xc4 9.♖xh8 is out, while 6...♗xd1 7.♖xd8 looks unpromising. So Black ought to go for 6...♗e7 7.d6 cxd6 8.f3, and now I think Black has some practical chances with 8...♗f5 9.♖xh8 d5 10.♗b5 0-0-0, but better to go with the computer move 8...♗h3! 9.gxh3 d5 10.♖xh8 dxc4.



Perhaps this position is winning for

White with proper play, but I don't think it's a trivial matter to negotiate the future with so little development. Technically this could be considered the refutation of 5...♗g4, and yet...6.♖xf7 has only been seen in three obscure games, and this all may still be suitable for Black in blitz.

JERSEY STRONG

I thought it an especially good day for Aidan to visit a tournament because his friend would be competing in the K-3 (Primary) Under 600 section. Two years ago we met Thomas Isernhagen when he and Aidan played on the same baseball team. Though he lived in Waldwick, Thomas attended a private school, Primoris Academy, where he had taken some chess classes. My private students are generally advanced tournament players, but since our families got to know each other well, I took on Thomas as a student. He started playing in the Glen Rock quads and after five tournaments stood at 494. I told his mother, Jennifer, the GNYSC would be a great chance for Thomas to test himself. No one in his section would be out of his league, and he might have a decent shot at winning first place.

I made a trip out of the cocoon to help escort Thomas to his first round. I don't know if Thomas had been in a room packed with so many people. I have to admit he looked slightly terrified.

His nerves didn't prevent Thomas from collecting his first point. He came back to the CGPS team room to show me the game, which looked a lot like most of the games he has shown me so far.

Going over a student's games is my favorite teaching tool. I get to learn where they might need to improve their knowledge and demeanor. Most kids in their early development exhibit the same problem: They play too fast. In fact, kids very commonly play the first move that pops into their heads. We never teach that of course, but it's so easy to get excited and impulsive, and so hard to correct it. I can always detect this phenomenon, when they don't play strong moves that would be obvious to them if they looked around. For instance, I might ask Thomas to find the best move in the position, and within twenty seconds he will give me the right answer. The problem is, he



▲ Aidan Benjamin and Thomas Isernhagen

might have taken half that time to play his move.

The good news is that the first move that pops into Thomas's head is usually a good one. The talented players can get away with playing with their hands, but it tends to catch up to them every few games or so. I told Thomas before the tournament that he would have a very good chance of winning each game if he would just use his time.

For students who play too fast (or advanced ones who take too much time) I advocate writing the clock times on the scoresheet. I pretty much can tell anyway if someone is racing through their moves, but this helps them to see it for themselves.

Thomas diligently wrote down his clock times (I had forgotten I had asked for that, but he did not) but the news was not good. Three minutes for the whole game. And the trend did not change. At 2-0 he didn't get much of a challenge in the third round, but I was still dismayed by the *one minute* elapsed on his clock. Thomas earned the dubious achievement

of fastest gunslinger in the team room.

Thomas met his biggest challenge in round four. He was forced to take more clock time because he needed a lot of moves to win the game. People often judge the toughness of a chess battle by its length, but it was what happened early in the game that made Thomas lucky to maintain his perfect score.

When Thomas plopped down his newly purchased scorebook, I recognized his opponent as one of our own: Sasha Gogolin, the youngest of a CGPS family of chessplayers. I looked around the room and summoned her over so we could have an old-fashioned post-mortem with both players present.

C77

Sasha Gogolin

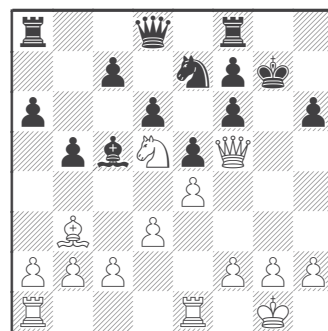
Thomas Isernhagen

Round 4, GNYSC K-3 Under 600, Brooklyn 2018

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♖c6 3.♖c3 ♖f6 4.♗b5 a6 5.♗a4 b5 6.♗b3 ♗b4 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 ♗b7 9.♗g5 h6 10.♗h4 d6?

I would have liked to see 10...♗e7 or 10...♗xc3 to meet White's plan. I'm sure Thomas has used White's scheme a few times of his own.

11.♖d5 ♗c5 12.♗xf6 gxf6 13.♖h4 ♗c8 14.♖h5 ♖h7 15.♖f5 ♗xf5 16.♖xf5+ ♖g7 17.♖fe1 ♖e7??

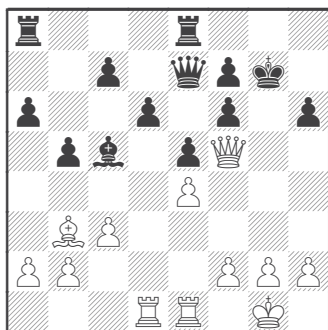




“Something is wrong here guys. What should White have done here,” I asked. But they both had a mental block. Sasha would have been a heavy favorite after 18. ♖xf6+.

18. ♖xe7? ♜xe7 19. d4!? This looks like a little kid giveaway, but ends up working as a clearance sacrifice. If Thomas had stopped to think, he might have gone for 19...exd4!, preparing to evict the queen with ...♜e7-e5.

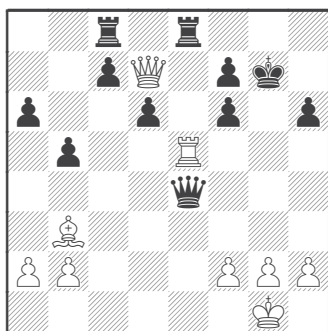
19... ♙xd4 20. c3 ♙c5 21. ♖ad1 ♜fe8



22. ♜d4??! I am punctuating this move unconventionally because while it is objectively very bad, Sasha’s idea is really very creative for a 500-rated player. Unfortunately for her, the plan of invading with the queen to h7 and mating requires Black to do nothing to stop it. So it’s big time “hope chess,” but the vision involved here is significant, too. I was happy to see Sasha bounce back and win the last round, snagging an individual place trophy.

The less creative 22. ♜d3 would have led to a probably decisive attack.

22...exd4 23. ♙c2 ♜e5 24. ♜g4+ ♜g5 25. ♜d7 ♜ac8 26. ♙b3 ♜g6 27. cxd4 ♙xd4 28. ♜d1 ♙e5 29. ♜d5 ♜xe4 30. ♜xe5



30... ♜xe5 “I should have played 30... ♜e1+,” Thomas told me. Yup. Or 30... ♜b1+, which mates as well. Please

slow down!

There were many more moves but Black eventually cashed in his extra material. Such is life in the topsy-turvy world of three-digit chess.

The last game was actually over in a flash, as Thomas was aided by a couple of careless moves.

C55

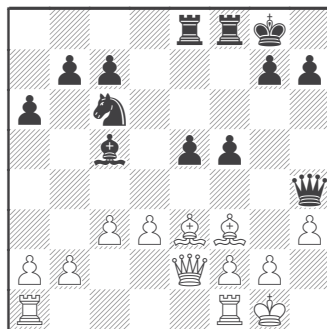
Thomas Isernhagen

Tolga Ergin

Round 5, GNYSC K-3 Under 600, Brooklyn 2018

1. e4 e5 2. ♖f3 ♖c6 3. ♙c4 ♖f6 4. ♖c3 ♖xe4 5. ♖xe4 d5 6. ♙d3 The soundest reaction to the Fork Trick, though few kids find this.

6... dxe4 7. ♙xe4 ♙c5 8. c3 0-0 9. d3 ♙g4 10. h3 ♙xf3 11. ♙xf3 ♜h4 12. 0-0 ♜ae8 13. ♙d2 a6 14. ♜e2 f5 15. ♙e3



15... f4? Black is in too much of a hurry and it costs him...now, and later.

16. ♙xc5 ♜f6 17. d4 exd4? 18. ♜xe8+ ♜f8 19. ♜xf8 mate.

When I ran into Jennifer Isernhagen, she had a surprising request for me. She last saw Thomas when he went into the bathroom – 45 minutes earlier. I didn’t find him in there, but I tried to track him down. I know that kids can suffer meltdowns after a crushing defeat. In her nervousness over her missing son, Jennifer buried the lead...Thomas had won his game.

When I got back to the team room I asked Aidan if he knew where Thomas was. I half expected “how should I know” followed by a crazy look, but Aidan was able to solve the mystery. “I saw him in

the bathroom. He won his game and is in a playoff.”

And he had a lot of work to do there. In the rather large section, five other kids had tied for first. Thomas managed to claw through the competition to get that ginormous first place trophy. Well done Thomas! But next time, tell your mom before you disappear.

AND THE WINNER IS...

I’ve seen Columbia Grammar win trophies for about sixteen years. I can’t match the excitement I felt in winning those first few times. A lot of the older kids have been through the process so many times that they, too, have lost some of that enthusiasm. CGPS fielded a middle school team in the High School Championship and took third place. That’s pretty impressive when you think about it. But at this point those kids are thinking about all the better moves they could have played, and where their busy lives are taking them next. They’ve lost the thrill of hoisting a trophy in front of a big audience (Well maybe they would have been excited about first place).

However, it’s a new experience for many of the younger kids, and that makes the ceremony a lot more fun. I get a kick out of seeing how happy the kids are when they get their hands on the hardware, some of them for the first time.

I have to say I enjoyed the K-3 under 600 team trophy a little more this year, for kind of a quirky reason. The ceremony started pretty promptly after the playoffs finished, and some of our staff (including the boss Sophia Rohde and senior coach John MacArthur) were in a different room for the K-3 under 1000 ceremony. (They took second place...not too shabby!) When the winning teams were announced, we didn’t know what place we had won, only that we totaled 16 points. As the Wi-Fi worked poorly in the big room, we were in for a rare surprise.

The third place team scored 15½ points. Could there be a tie for first? Yes! We listened for the second place team... and it wasn’t us! Columbia Grammar gets first!

And so another scholastic tournament goes in the books, but this one will leave some memories to enjoy for a while. ■

CHESS PARENT'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS

MY FRIEND MAX, A BRAIN SURGEON, ONCE TOLD ME "CHESS IS HARDER THAN BRAIN SURGERY." I SHARE THIS QUOTE WITH PARENTS TO DEMONSTRATE THE IMPORTANCE OF GAUGING THE APTITUDE OF YOUR KIDS FOR CHESS. HERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL TIPS FOR CREATING REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

by **RYAN VELEZ**



1

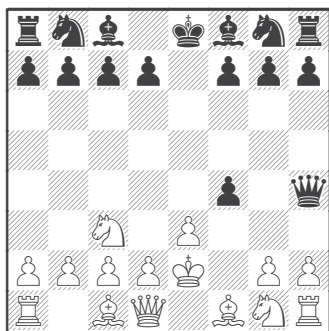
I played the following game when I was just starting out in chess. It is a hilarious game which shows how terrible a player I was even though I eventually became a National Master. I should mention this game occurred in a tournament where I decided to notate all my games for the first time:

Ryan Velez

Stephanie Freidman

Louisville 2001

1.e3 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘c3 ♔h4+ 4.♙e2



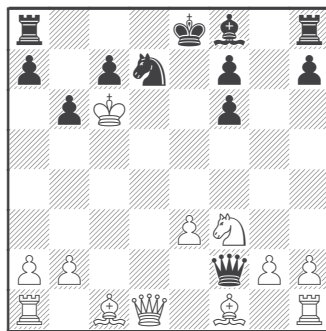
if you understand only a little bit about chess you will know playing ♙e2 this early is usually a sign of disaster.

The game continues 4...fxe3 5.♘f3 ♚f2+ 6.♙d3 b6?

I then played 7.♘e4! and Stephanie realized her queen was trapped.

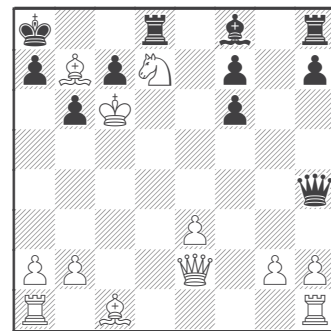
She could only see one way to save her queen: 7...♙a6+ 8.c4 ♙xc4+ 9.♙xc4 d5+ 10.♙xd5 ♘f6+ 11.♘xf6+ gxf6 and you can see her queen is no longer under attack.

The game continued 12.dxe3 ♘d7 13.♙c6



White is threatening checkmate on the next move by playing 14.♙xd7# –

seasoned players will find this position hilarious. 13...0-0-0 14.♙a6+ ♘b8 15.♙e2 ♘e5+ 16.♘xe5 ♙h4 and Stephanie makes this retreat because she wanted to save her queen. The game concluded 17.♘d7+ ♙a8 18.♙b7 mate.



If your kids are anything like me, they likely churn out some funny games like this one. You should expect this to happen when your kids play. The road to mastery is paved with many silly chess moves.

2

Parents regularly ask me “How did you improve as a player?” and the answer is always the same: hard work. Your child does not need to become a grandmaster to benefit from chess. The best measure to know if chess is helping your child is their hard work. Are they solving chess puzzles or reading chess books? Are they looking up new opening moves or reading chess articles? Are they trying to figure out how to beat Samson at the next tournament? To all parents I recommend two things: encourage their hard work and provide them the tools with which to work hard.



Ryan Velez was taught chess at the age of three by his mother. During his first year of high school, he attended his first chess competition and went undefeated. From that point on he found his niche in the chess community as a player. Then, after several tournament victories, he found his niche as a chess instructor starting in 2001. Now, Ryan is a National Chess Master and multi-time state champion. He spends most of this time writing up chess training materials to assist coaches in the classroom. Ryan has served as a delegate in the US Chess Federation for 4 years and has worked with different chess companies from around the country. He is also an active tournament organizer in and around Kentucky.

3

In February of 2018 I helped run a larger scholastic tournament. After the awards ceremony, an irate parent came up to me frustrated that his child did not get an honorable mention. I gave some players who tied for 10th place, but did not receive a trophy, honorable mentions. The irate parent’s son scored only 1-point out of 5. As a parent reading this column, you should understand the irate parent’s behavior to be an incorrect approach to good chess parenting. Chess teaches you how to handle your losses and wanting to be rewarded for scoring poorly sends the wrong message to your children.

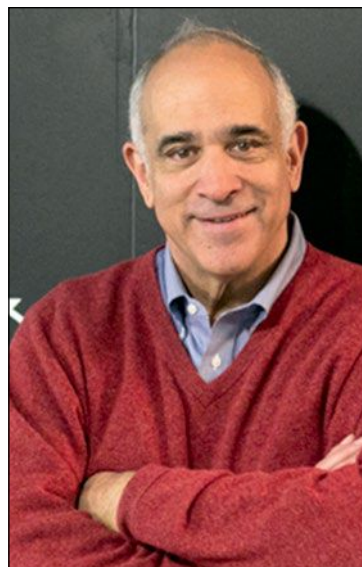
4

Every parent who knows a little bit about playing chess is often tempted to allow their kids to win sometimes. This is a common mistake and should be avoided. The reason is because it requires hard work to become a good chess player and to receive the benefits of chess. Allowing your child to beat you makes them think they have achieved a milestone when they are in fact miles away from that stone. To improve in chess, players must struggle with themselves to overcome obstacles. It is extremely healthy to be one of your child’s first obstacles in chess and when they legitimately beat you for the first time it will not only be a day you both remember forever but the day you realize chess is benefiting your child.

...CAROL MEYER

NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF USCF

I had contacted the new Executive Director some months back. She understandably wanted to get acclimated to her new position and promised to come to the World Amateur Team Championship/USATE – and she did! Back then I had asked her about hush puppies, a treat I experienced in North Carolina some years back. She came with a little bag of hush puppy mix just for me! Carol is very engaging, very smart and everyone I talked to came away impressed, especially that she was genuinely interested in what chess players had to say.



by PETE TAMBURRO

■ **Tell us a little about yourself: where did you grow up, what colleges you went to, what you did before getting the ED post, what kinds of things do you enjoy?**

I grew up on Long Island and went to high school near Albany, New York. I was a political science major at Stony Brook University. I earned my MBA at Meredith College in Raleigh, North Carolina.

In Washington, DC, I got involved in politics by working for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and learned how the business community thinks. I then began managing non-profits and over time I became a generalist. I worked for the hospice association in the Carolinas, and a NASA and NOAA funded environmental science data consortium.

My husband Chris and I each have two kids. I love to cook, cycle, hike, and walk my dog.

■ **When you saw this job opportunity, did you research the USCF and what did you find and how did it affect your expectations for the job?**

I spent a fair amount of time on the US Chess website and even spent a little time on forums. I Googled chess generally. Nothing I saw scared me away! Instead, I was intrigued by this opportunity as being something different than anything I had experienced. Because the organization was in transition from one type of non-profit to another, I saw it as a good opportunity and a good fit for me as I like to build things.

■ **As you're out raising funds, what do you think the expectations or impressions of foundations or corporations are when they research the USCF?**

We need to communicate the many good things about chess to these potential funders. As I understand it, my predecessor Jean Hoffman, the Executive Board (past and present), and our delegates have all helped move the needle to allow the organization to focus on what it does best – enabling chess throughout the United States and meeting its new mission.

A prudent foundation will pull our 990s. We have to ensure our Executive Board continues its commitment to



AMONGST OUR MEMBERSHIP, THE INTENSITY LEVEL OF CHESS PLAYERS ASTONISHED ME. FOR ME, SEEING 1800+ KIDS QUIETLY SITTING TOGETHER AT THE SAME TIME IN THE SAME VENUE IS REMARKABLE. ALL OF US CHESS HAS SUCH PASSION FOR THE GAME AND WANT TO SEE THE GAME GROW.

more transparency, that we demonstrate our financial stewardship, and show how we are meeting our 501c3 mission. Our success with these organizations will be affected by how well we tell our story and build relationships.

■ **Do you see your primary thrust as ED as a fund-raiser and how will this impact other traditionally accepted roles of an ED involving chess policies and the running of the office?**

My initial focus will continue to build on what Jean Hoffman accomplished, which includes a focus on infrastructure and an important IT transition. Presently, we are moving all web and database assets to the cloud. The next step will be redevelopment of our membership database and building our member and public-facing websites. In the early going, my focus has been to put US Chess operations in a position to better support a new fundraising program.

■ **When we contacted you a while back, you were awash in meetings, emails and hitting the ground running. What have you learned in that time about US Chess? What were you're most important observations?**

We need to modernize our IT infrastructure as we can't continue to be slaves to our outmoded systems. Current IT systems allow users to easily pull information or data. For example, a member should be able to make simple requests such

as, "What tournaments, clubs, or coaches are nearby?" and have a list instantly returned. USChess.org will become user friendly.

I have found our staff to be 100 percent dedicated. Our Executive Board members are focused on doing what's best for US Chess. There may be disagreements about the best path to take, but all are dedicated. Leadership sets the tone for the organization.

Amongst our membership, the intensity level of chess players astonished me. For me, seeing 1800+ kids quietly

sitting together at the same time in the same venue is remarkable. All of US Chess has such passion for the game and want to see the game grow.

■ **What people have been most helpful to you in this transition period?**

When I first started I called every EB member to hear what was on their mind. I learned what each can contribute if I need help. I have almost weekly conference calls with Allen Priest and Mike Hoffpauir. They have been very supportive to help me learn the ins and outs of US Chess.

■ **Do you have an immediate or 5 year or 10 year strategic plan for US Chess?**

The January EB meeting was focused on strategic planning. The plan is not finalized, but has a strong tie to prior board goals from 2-3 years ago. It affirms the goals set then. The focus has now moved to, "How do we achieve those goals? How do we make the things previously identified happen?" For example, how do we increase under-represented populations in chess: students in title one schools, females, seniors. We need to establish emerging



▲ Carol Meyer and Pete Tamburro. Photo by Josip Asik.



partnerships with large national entities – reaching out beyond traditional chess communities – and approach both for profit and non-profit corporations to help us meet our mission.

■ **Do you have any plans to go to the state federation meetings of say NJ, NY, PA, CA, TX, IL or FL among the larger states?**

Yes. Over a three to four year period we have discussed internally the need to connect with our chess communities throughout the country. It is important to hear what's going on. We don't want to simply collect fees. We want to interact. I like to hear what's on the minds of our members, take suggestions, and incorporate all of this into our strategic plans. I don't have all the answers so I rely on and encourage input. It's my role to synthesize that input for a way forward.

■ **What did you learn about US Chess from reading American Chess Magazine?**

I've only had time to scan the magazine, but recognize the stories are different from what we publish in Chess Life.

■ **Are you familiar with the bumpy financial history of the USCF and what thoughts do you have about that?**

I have the luxury of coming on board at a time of good finances; however, we need to diversify revenue sources as we are heavily dependent on tournaments

and membership revenue. Fundraising of all kinds needs to be sought out: gifts large and small, stock gifts, bequests, etc.

■ **What does US Chess need to do to help you raise money in terms of how we present ourselves to the world of corporations and foundations?**

US Chess needs to develop a strategy for fundraising. This strategy will require using our Board, our committee leadership and members to help us build relationships aimed at growing US Chess programs. We also need to hire a salaried development director whose job it will be to set the framework for a robust development program.

■ **How do you view our website, our forums, our publications and our online presence in general in this regard?**

A complete technological overhaul is underway. Our communications with our membership and the "outside world" has to have a strategic focus. We need to be aware of and utilize the most effective tools to affect this communication.

■ **How do you view what your relationship with the Policy Board in terms of a division of labor and decision making in terms of chess and "non-chess" areas?**

Listen and learn! To be perfectly honest, I use the people on the Executive Board to deal with chess matters. We also have a

**I KNOW HOW TO
MOVE THE PIECES
AND HAVE PLAYED
WITH MY FAMILY.
I HAVE CONSIDERED
TAKING LESSONS
AFTER I SETTLE
IN A BIT MORE.
I WAS THINKING
ABOUT BLOGGING
THE PERSONAL
EXPERIENCE OF
SOMEONE OVER THE
AGE OF 50 LEARNING
THE GAME.**

committee structure that advises the EB on chess issues. My expertise is in organizational development and strategy. All the parts are working well together.

■ **Considering our past history, how much would you keep in our reserve funds and why? Who is responsible for investment decisions with respect to those funds?**

The million dollars we now have in our reserve fund represents three to four months of operations. We should strive for six months to a year in reserve. Our monies are in highly conservative accounts and

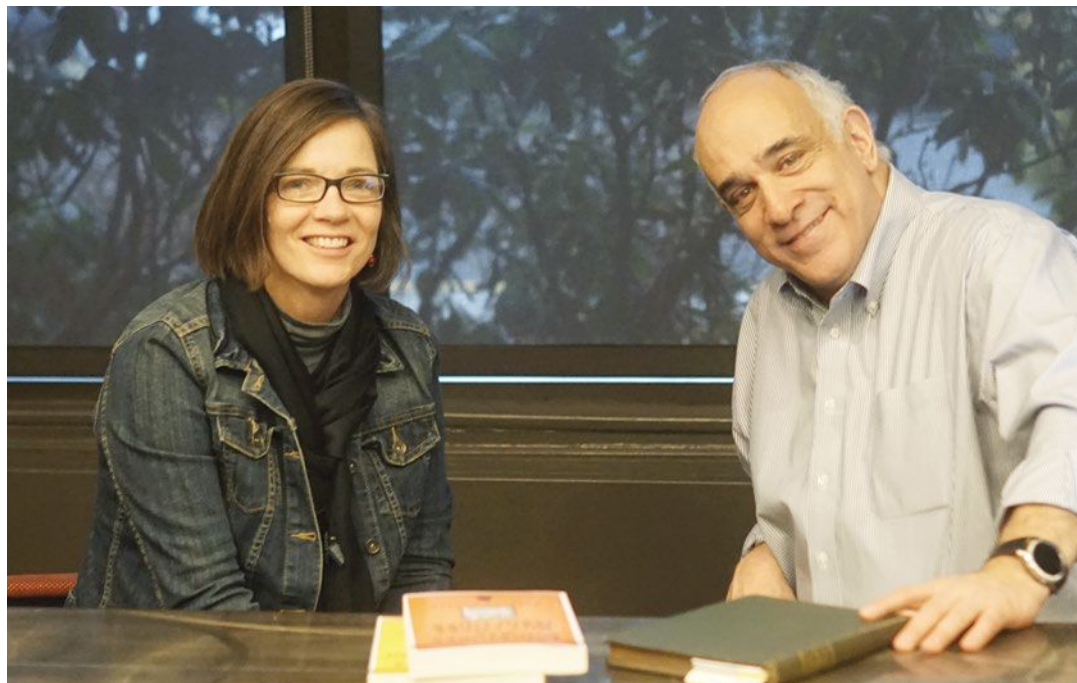
we have knowledgeable people keeping an eye on them.

■ **What are your thoughts about the US Chess strategies for chess in education, using our natural relationship to STEM programs and reaching out to school districts, state legislatures and such?**

It can be done! There is good work being done throughout the country. Recently I visited a model program led by Ranae Bartlett in Madison, Alabama. She runs the Madison City Chess League in a community where chess is embedded in the school curriculum. She is also the president of the school board. They are collecting data in the school system that we hope can help us learn more about the impact of chess in education. We should not limit our research to the benefits of chess in education, instead, we also need to encourage research on chess's impact on senior brain health as well as the game's social benefits.

■ **What are your thoughts on what the role of our publications should be and should there be more or less and should all members get them? How do you look at the role of print vs. online access in all of this?**

US Chess will publish instructional "how to" booklets and digital e-books as well as making templates available to members and affiliates. Like everything within US Chess, we are looking at improving the



▲ Carol Meyer and Pete Tamburro. Photo by Josip Asik.

way we communicate and the methods for doing so.

■ **Do you see yourself as personally making presentations to money sources?**

Yes. We will have a team which has already built relationships in this area and that will enhance our networking both within the chess community and outside of it.

■ **What was the most important tip Jean Hoffman gave you?**

Jean Hoffman, who was terrific in the transition, told me: Stay out of the politics!

■ **Have you learned to play chess? Anybody offer you lessons? Do you have a learn chess strategic plan?**

I know how to move the pieces and have played with my family. What I've learned

is that playing chess for a tournament player is a very different concept from playing chess as a casual player. I have considered taking lessons after I settle in a bit more. I was thinking about blogging the personal experience of someone over the age of 50 learning the game.

■ **What are your impressions of the team tournament?**

Exceptional! There is such great interest for people to come and play here – I was amazed that you actually have a waiting list. Competition, fun, and social interaction is what brings people back year after year. I was struck by how many people told me that the US Amateur Team East is like a reunion for them.

■ **If or when we sit down again some time down the road, what do you want**

to be able to point to in terms of what US Chess has accomplished?

In about 18 months I want to be able to point to a new, robust website that effectively communicates what we value. A major priority is having a member site that supports our members in ways we have not done in the past. I want us to be fully staffed, including a development director and an assistant director of events. I want to see that we have made strides in chess in education. I want us to be deeply involved by that point of doing the harder work of raising funds, forming partnerships, and receiving grants.

■ **Right now, how many are on site in Crossville?**

We have seven working every day in the Crossville office. More than 50% of our staff works remotely, stretching across the U.S.

■ **What role changes, if any, do you see for the various committees?**

The committees created by the EB don't have charters or specifically delineated responsibilities. There are no term limits, nor is there an evaluation process. The EB is working with committees right now to assist with documenting roles and responsibilities. We also need a system to preserve the "corporate memory." This will be part of our infrastructure upgrade.

■ **To get back to that money question, please explain a little more how all of it's handled.**

It's committee driven. EB Member Chuck Unruh is our VP of Finance. He is an investor and has made excellent decisions for us. The Life Member Assets account is segregated and managed separately from our operational accounts. Our operations account is segregated from our savings (reserves) account. Between Chuck and VP Allen Priest, we have an excellent team overseeing our finances.

■ **How do you interact with office staff from your home in North Carolina?**

We have weekly staff meetings. I call in and we all talk about what's going on. I like to empower people in their jobs, and I've noticed that they are asking more questions and making more suggestions than even four short months ago. Personal interaction and building relationships not only works in the office, but will help US Chess prosper as we venture out to the larger world. ■

Take chess to the next level in America. Help encourage and develop an online ChessBase type organization. Improve the Chess Life magazine... maybe a combination of New in Chess and the American Chess Magazine. A more aggressive promotion of chess in the public schools should be encouraged too.

Manuel Infante,
Oklahoma City, OK

I have no problems with the USCF. I only wish that we could find some way to increase purse values so that top rated tournament players can actually make a living.

Douglas Shufelt,
Golden Valley, MN

The USCF uses a wonderful web-based pairings and results system for its tournaments. Local tournament organizers, particularly scholastic organizers, would benefit from such an organizational tool. Has the USCF considered developing and licensing software for tournament direction? This would also facilitate communication of results to USCF, for more seamless rating and reporting.

Lucas Anderson,
Houston, TX

Privatize! It's time to ditch the USCF's non-profit status and go the route of commercial sponsorship and profit-driven success. There is more than enough participation and interest out there now.

Mark Warriner,
Henrico, VA

Carol Meyer is the new executive director of USCF. Do you have a question or suggestion for Carol so that she could improve USCF affairs?

I do not have any questions or suggestions for her. But I do wish to congratulate Carol Meyer in her new role as executive director. She seems well qualified for the appointment. I am really glad that USCF has taken an initiative to encourage the development of chess in schools.

Melvin DuMars,
Normal, IL

Reduce the cost for Clubs to become USCF affiliates. Most local clubs are run on a shoestring budget.

John Teixeira,
Charlottesville, VA

I'd like to see separate ratings for classical time control events. What it takes to win a g/30 is not the same as what it takes to win a g/1 hour or more.

Brian Karen,
Levittown, NY

What would you do to convince educators to include chess in the school curriculum?

Mehran Divanbaigzand,
McLean, VA

Please do not get bogged down in politics. Please focus on long term growth and sustainability for our federation. I would poll as many veteran directors as you can to find out what they think needs to be changed.

Christopher Baumgartner,
Des Plaines, IL

Get more corporate sponsorship by leveraging the US Chess member base.

Patrick Tang,
Plymouth, MA

Get back to traditional time control 2 hours 40 moves 1 h 20 moves and 1 hour KO!

Sebastien Viaud,
France

In many ways the USCF has kept up with the "Internet age." However, it's USCF Sales seems clunky and old fashioned. How could this be improved such that it could save the USCF money, while at the same time making it easier/more efficient for members to make purchases. Think Amazon Prime...

Robert Pearson,
Fremont, CA

Merge the magazine with ACM. The format is old and tired. The material is all out of date by the time it's published.

Greg Kelly,
North Palm Beach, FL

How can we give older players relief from the rating floor that dooms us to play in a class way above our actual strength? A rating from 20-30 years ago forces us to play up, sometimes way up, making

tournaments much less enjoyable.

Bob Haskell
Weatherford, TX

Please reach out to players who are in their 60's and older.

Richard Lurye,
Rockville, MD

Make the tournaments fairer for older adults, those who have supported USCF for decades and not slanted just to kids.

David Cofer,
Irving, TX

Of the myriad things which require improvement, my biggest gripe is the website. It's exhaustive to trudge through. It's also painful to research fellow players. For example, why can't I look up members in my own city? The search functions are deeply reminiscent of the mid-90s era.

Jeremy Treadwell,
Bakersfield, CA

USCF needs more players. Young people do appreciate (successful) tournaments with their awards. Internet offers a huge opportunity to develop cheap and numerous tournaments for these young people. Here lies certainly a part of the future of chess in the USA.

Philippe Chappé,
France

She should be more careful on details concerning subscriber service. I was once a Chess Life subscriber and quit for little things that they did not want for whatever reasons to be more diligent with.

Kamal Dager,
Venezuela

A PEAK INTO THE MODERN RUSSIAN CHESS SCHOOL

YOU HAVE TO KNOW IT: DRAWING TECHNIQUES

IT MIGHT LOOK SIMPLE, BUT GUESS WHAT – IF YOU FULLY ADOPT THE PRINCIPLES GIVEN HERE, THEN CONSIDER YOURSELF AN ENDGAME EXPERT RIGHT AWAY! THIS IS A CLASS FOR HIGHLY ASPIRING STUDENTS IN ONE OF THE WELL ESTABLISHED CHESS SCHOOLS OF PRESENT-DAY MOSCOW.

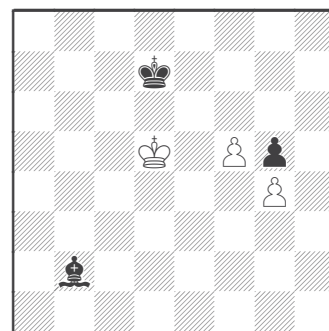
by **GM YAKOV GELLER**

Modern chess is speeding up, and it brings to mind a very common situation: a classical tournament game reaches an endgame where both players have less than five minutes each on the clock. Knowing different drawing techniques by heart and drawing patterns or winning techniques and winning patterns could prove decisive in these cases.

Here I will present one way of learning these patterns by memorizing key positions and key squares and being able to quickly notice the difference between similar examples.

To begin with, let's take a look at this classical "drawing technique."

Technique 01



Black is simply unable to dislodge the white king from d5.

1...♔a3 The black king cannot get across the e5-square. After **1...♔e7** the white king occupies the d5-square and moves to either c6 or e4 depending on the placement of his counterpart: **2.♔c6 ♔f6 3.♔d5 ♔a1 4.♔e4 ♔b2 5.♔d5=** It's not possible to slip by the powerful guard on d5.



Yakov Geller. Photo by Josip Asik.

Also, there's no progress in case Black tries to infiltrate via the queenside: 1...♖c7 2.♗e6 (Black simply cannot stop the f-pawn and at the same time preserve his g-pawn) 2...♗d8 (2...♗c6 3.f6 ♗c5 4.f7 ♗g7 5.♗f5=) 3.♗f7 (or even 3.f6 ♗e8 4.f7+ ♗f8 5.♗f5 ♖c1 6.♗g6=) 3...♗d4 4.f6. Black may even lose if he misses the correct square with his bishop: 4...♗c3 5.♗g6=. Upon 1...♗a1 the white king has no c6-square available. Still, there's no harm for White after 2.♗c5!, and with his next move the white king will return to d5: 2...♗b2 3.♗d5=.

2.♗e5 □ Here we need to note that if the white king goes back with 2.♗d4?!, then Black wins easily after 2...♗d6.

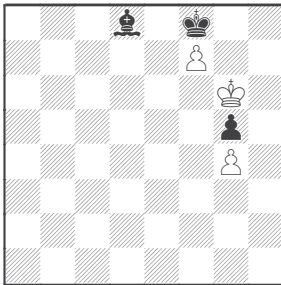
GLOSSARY

The sign □ stands for "the only move"

The sign ○ stands for "zugzwang"

2...♗c1!? Simply useless is 2...♗e7 3.♗d5=; Black also fails to make progress in case of 2...♗c6 3.f6 ♗d7 4.♗f5 ♗c1 5.♗g6 ♗e8 6.♗g7 ♗b2 7.♗g6=. Readers should memorize this pattern of combined threats against the g5-pawn and the promotion of the f-pawn!

3.♗d5 □ But not 3.f6?? ♗e8 4.♗e6 ♗f8 5.f7 ♗a3 6.♗f6 ♗e7+ 7.♗g6 ♗d8-+



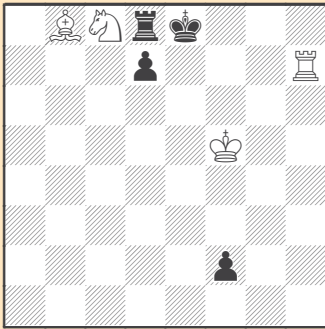
This is also a position to be memorized! No better is 3.♗f6?? ♗d6 4.♗g6 ♗e5 5.f6 ♗f4 6.f7 ♗a3-+.

3...♗f4 4.♗c5 □ **♗e5 5.♗d5** □ The essence of this "drawing technique" is very clear – Black has no means of

CHESS STUDY
THE BEAUTY OF CHESS

I would like to share a very amusing study.

C.Bent
1967



White to play and win

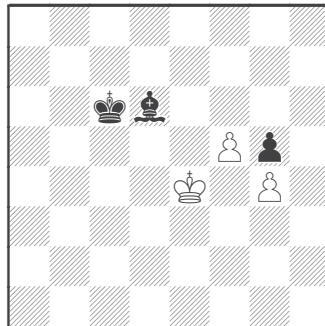
Solution on page 130

dislodging the white king from the d5-square.

5...♗d6 ○ This zugzwang attempt is a unique opportunity to pose problems for White.

6.♗e4 Also the odd 6.♗d4?! doesn't let the draw slip away, as after 6...♗c6 7.♗e4 all the ideas from the main line remain.

6...♗c6



Since Black now controls the d5-square the game proceeds in forced fashion. Upon any bishop move, e.g. 6...♗g3,

White plays 7.♗d5=.

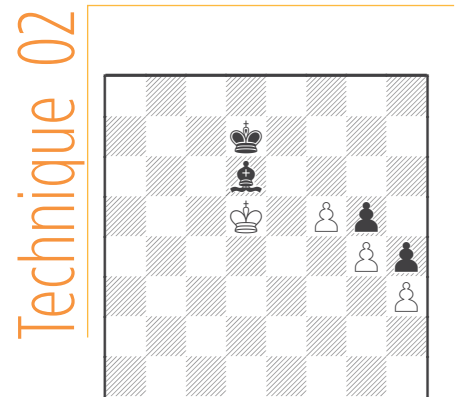
7.f6 □ 7.♗d4?? ♗f4 8.f6 ♗d6-+.

7...♗d7 In case of 7...♗f4 White can play 8.f7 ♗d6 □ 9.♗f5, forcing a draw: 9...♗e7 10.f8 ♗ ♗xf8 11.♗xg5=.

8.♗f5 □ **♗f4 9.♗g6** White achieves the same goal also after 9.f7 ♗e7 10.♗g6 ♗f8 11.♗f6 ♗c1 12.♗g6=.

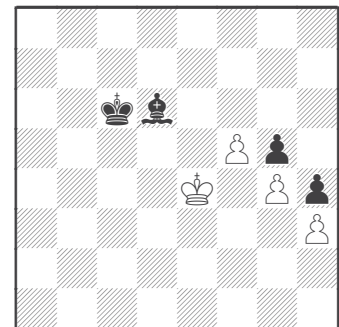
9...♗e8 10.♗g7 ♗e5 11.♗g6 Have you memorized this one?!

11...♗f4 12.♗g7=



This position is from the game Bukavshin - Moiseenko, which will be analyzed in detail later. It is not difficult to realize that both h-pawns are irrelevant here – learn and memorize.

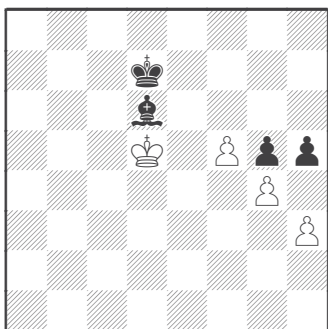
1.♗e4 ♗c6



Do you remember the similar position from the previous example? If you do, then of course you know how to proceed:

2.f6! ♗d7 3.♗f5 ♗f4 4.♗g6 ♗e8 5.♗g7 ♗e5 6.♗g6 ♗f4 7.♗g7=

Technique 03



1...♔h2!?

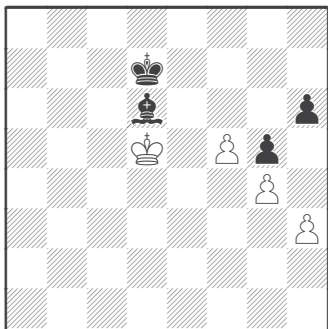
1...h4= – see Technique 2;

1...hxg4 2.hxg4= – see Technique 1.

2.♔c5 ♕g3 3.♔d5 ♕d6 4.♔e4 ♔c6 5.f6!= Repeating the same pattern from the previous examples!

Let's take a look at this position, where the black pawn is now on h6 instead.

Technique 04



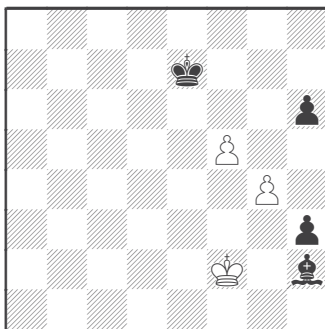
1.h4! The simplest solution. In case of White's analogous play to the previous examples, his task becomes more complex as the pawn on g5 is now well protected. However, according to my analysis, the game ends in a draw here also. 1.♔e4 ♔c6 2.f6 ♔d7 3.♔f5 and White needs to display the utmost precision: 3...♔e8 (3...♔b4 4.f7! ♕f8 5.h4!= uses the fact that the bishop is of an opposite color to the h1-square!) 4.♔g6 ♕f8, and here follows a study-like finish: 5.♔h5!! ♔f7 6.h4 ♔xf6 7.hxg5+ hxg5 stalemate!

1...gxh4!? Black cannot just sit and wait: 1...♔a3 2.hxg5 hxg5= brings about the classical Technique 1. If Black tries 1...♔f4 2.hxg5 ♕xg5, then the simplest way for White to draw is to get rid of the



f5-pawn: 3.f6 ♔e8 4.f7+ ♔xf7 5.♔e4=.

2.♔e4 h3 3.♔f3 ♔e7 4.♔f2 ♕h2!

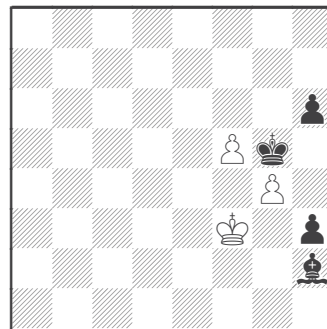


During a game this could be the breaking point. However, it turns out that Black cannot further strengthen his position. The bishop is not able to leave h2, because then the white king will get to h1, whereas the black king is tied to the protected passed pawn on f5. If Black wants to win the game, he should consider either the undermining ...h5 break or king march to h4, hoping for a bishop transfer to the diagonal a7-g1.

5.♔f3 ♔f6 It is possible to “pass” with 5...♔f7 6.♔f2 ♔f6 7.♔f3 ♔g5 8.♔f2, but there are no dividends for Black here – 8...h5!? (8...♔e5 9.♔g1=; 8...♔h4 9.f6 ♕d6 10.♔g1=; 8...♔xg4 9.f6 ♕d6 10.♔g1=) 9.gxh5 ♔xh5 (9...♔xf5 10.h6 ♔g6 11.♔f3=) 10.f6! (10.♔f3? ♔h4!–+) 10...♔g6 11.♔f3=.

6.♔f2 ♔g5 Or from the other side 6...♔e5 7.♔f3 ♔d5 8.♔f2=.

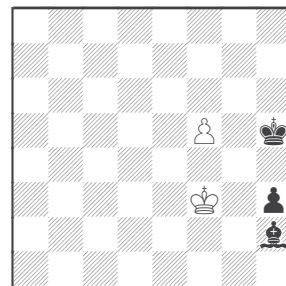
7.♔f3



7...♔h4!? The last trap. 7...h5 8.gxh5 ♔xf5 9.h6 ♔g6 10.♔g4=.

8.♔f2! 8.f6? loses due to 8...♕d6 9.♔f2 ♕c5+.

8...h5 9.gxh5 ♔xh5 10.f6! It was still not too late to err: 10.♔f3?

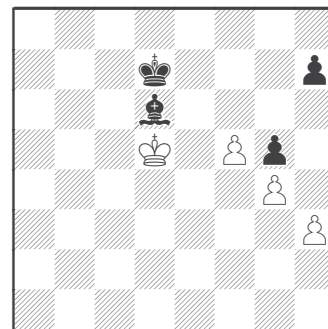


10...♔h4!! 11.f6 (11.♔f2 ♔g5–+) 11...♕d6 12.♔f2 (12.f7 ♕c5–+) 12...♕c5+ 13.♔f3 (13.♔f1 ♔g3 14.f7 h2–+) 13...♔a7 14.f7 ♕c5–+.

10...♔g6 11.♔f3 ♕d6 11...♔xf6 12.♔g4=.

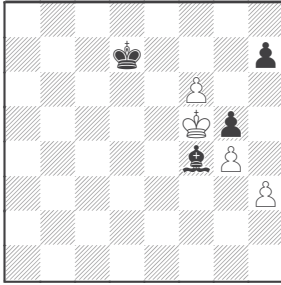
12.♔f2 ♕h2 13.♔f3=

Technique 05



With a black pawn on h7, 1.h4! leads to

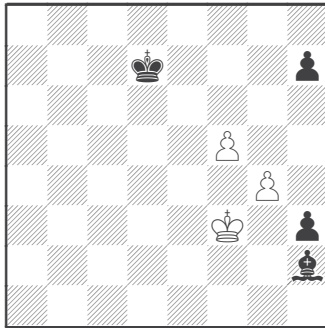
a draw. However, so does the standard
 1.♔e4 ♕c6 2.f6! = ♔d7 3.♔f5 ♕f4



4.h4 h6 5.hxg5 hxg5 6.♔g6 ♔e8 7.♔g7
 ♕e5 8.♔g6=.

1...gxh4 1...h6 2.hxg5 hxg5=; 1...♕f4
 2.hxg5 ♕xg5 3.f6=.

2.♔e4 h3 3.♔f3 ♕h2

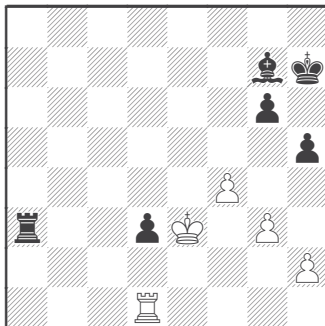


4.g5!? In general, even after 4.♔f2 ♔e7
 5.♔f3 ♔f6 6.♔f2 ♔g5 7.♔f3= Black has
 no additional resources.

4...♔e7 5.f6+ =

Ivan Bukavshin	2622
Aleksander Moiseenko	2695

European Championship, Jerusalem 2015

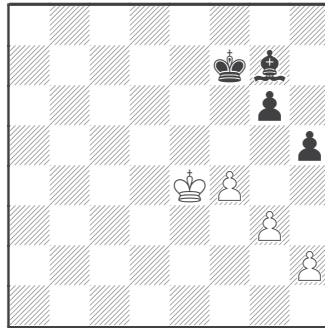


44.♔xd3 ♔xd3+? Keeping the rooks

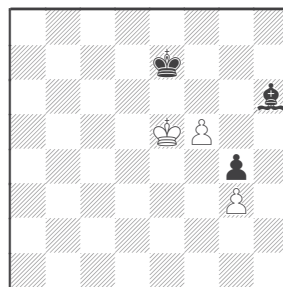
on the board provided Black with great
 winning chances.

45.♔xd3= To achieve a draw, White
 has two options: the first – to trade all
 his pawns for the black h-pawn, entering
 a famous drawing scenario against the
 “wrong colored” bishop; and the second
 – to place his pawns in a formation h3-
 g4-f5, getting into a less famous, but
 nonetheless drawing, stance.

45...♔g8 46.♔e4 ♔f7



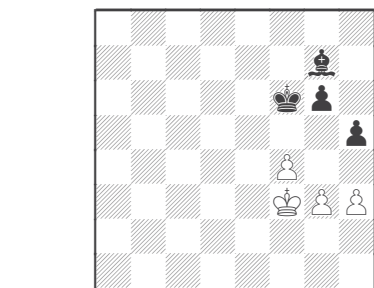
47.♔f3! Only not 47.f5? g5 48.h3 ♔e7
 49.♔d5 with a threat of playing g3-g4
 next move, transposing to the drawing
 technique seen in the game (or 49.g4
 hxg4 50.hxg4 ♔d6! –+ and the white king
 fails to come to d5.) 49...g4! 50.hxg4
 hxg4 51.♔e4 ♕h6! (51...♔f6? 52.♔f4=)
 52.♔e5



52...♔f7! (52...♕c1? 53.f6+ ♔f7
 54.♔f5=) 53.f6 ♔g6! –+ and Black
 easily wins with help of a zugzwang:
 54.♔e6 ♕g5 55.f7 ♕h6 56.♔e5 (56.♔e7
 ♔f5 –+) 56...♔g5 57.♔e6 ♕g7 58.♔d6
 ♔f6 59.♔d5 ♔xf7 60.♔e4 ♔g6 61.♔f4
 ♔h5 –+.

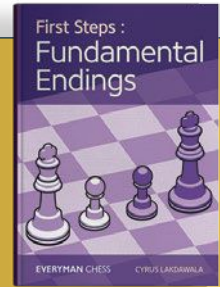
Equally, 47.h3 ♔e6 (47...♔f6 48.♔f3
 – see 47.♔f3) 48.♔f3 (48.g4? loses
 because of 48...hxg4 49.hxg4 ♔d6! as
 White is not in time to apply the drawing
 technique in view of his king being

gradually dislodged from his pawns.)
 48...♔f6 (48...♔d6 49.h4! =)



49.g4! (remember this position and don't
 forget that if black captures on g4, you
 should recapture with a king; the h-pawn
 march is unstoppable and secures a draw)
 49...h4 50.♔e4 ♔e7 (50...♔e6 51.f5+
 gx f5+ 52.gxf5+ ♔d6 53.♔f3=) 51.f5! g5
 52.♔d5=.

47...♔f6 47...♔e6 48.g4 h4 49.f5+ =;
 upon 47...♔e7 Black does not control the
 f5-square; that's why the simplest way
 is 48.h4!? followed by the unavoidable



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EVERYMAN CHESS

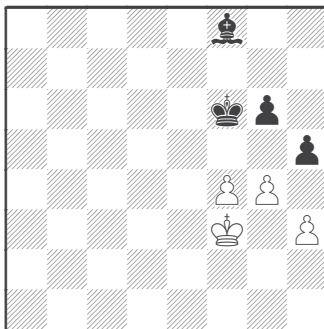
g3-g4 next move with further pawn trades and a draw: 48...♖e6 49.g4 hxg4+ (49...♙c3 50.gxh5 gxh5 51.♖g2=) 50.♖xg4 ♙c3 51.h5=.

48.h3! 48.h4? ♖f5+; after 48.g4?! h4□ 49.h3□ (49.♖e4?? h3+) 49...♖e7!? (49...♖e6 50.f5+=; 49...♙f8 50.♖e4 ♙d6 51.f5 g5 52.♖d5=) White saves the game in miraculous fashion by means of 50.g5!. Of course this idea became possible only because of the unfortunate placement of the bishop. (50.f5 g5 51.♖e4 ♖d6-+; 50.♖e4 ♖d6-+) 50...♖e6 (50...♙c3 51.♖g4 ♙e1 52.f5=) 51.♖g4 ♙c3 52.♖xh4 ♖f5 53.♖g3 ♙e1+ 54.♖f3 and here on the board there is a draw. 54...♙h4 (54...♙d2 55.h4 ♙xf4 56.h5=) 55.♖e3 ♙g3 56.♖f3 ♙xf4 57.h4 ♙c1 58.h5=.

48...♙f8 48...h4 49.gxh4 ♖f5 50.h5=; 48...♖f5 49.g4+ hxg4+ 50.hxg4+ ♖f6

51.f5 g5 52.♖e4 ♖e7 53.♖d5= is the classical drawing technique.

49.g4!?



After 49.♖e4 all the drawing ideas remain for White; there is no win for Black here.

49...h4 Upon 49...hxg4+ 50.♖xg4! and Black is helpless to prevent White's h-

pawn march – h4-h5. (50.hxg4? ♖e7! 51.♖e4 ♖d6-+) On 49...♙d6 Black cannot just wait, since after 50.gxh5 gxh5 it's a dead draw again.

50.♖e4 ♙b4 50...♖e6 fails to 51.f5+□=.

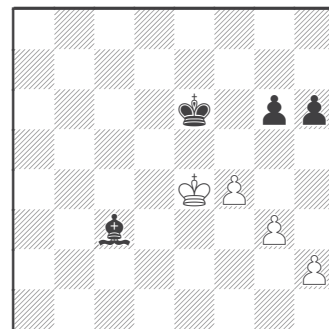
51.f5! g5 52.♖d5= We have managed to implement the famous drawing technique, only with pawns on h3 and h4. Also here Black is unable to win. White's king simply moves across d5-c6-e5-e4, performing a single task – preventing the black king from move forward.

52...♖e7 53.♖c6 ♙a3 Check it out: 53...♙d6 54.♖d5 ♖d7○ 55.♖e4 (the white king threatens to get back to d5) 55...♖c6 56.f6! leads to a forced draw, because the presence of pawns on the h-file does not change the assessment of the position due to the “wrong colored” bishop: 56...♖d7 57.♖f5 ♙f4 58.♖g6 ♖e8 59.♖g7 ♙e5 60.♖g6! ♙f4 61.♖g7=.

54.♖d5 ♖d7 55.♖e5 ♙b2+ 56.♖d5 ♙g7 57.♖c5 ♙e5 58.♖d5 ♙b8 59.♖c5 ♙c7 60.♖d5 ♙d6 61.♖e4 ♙f4 62.♖d5 ♖e7 63.♖c6 ♖f7 64.♖d5 ♖f6 65.♖e4 ♙e5 66.♖d5 ♙b2 67.♖e4 ♖f7 68.♖d5 ♖e7 69.♖c5 ♖d7 70.♖d5 ♙f6 71.♖c5 ♙d8 72.♖d5 ♙b6 73.♖e5 ♖e7 74.♖d5 ♙c7 75.♖c5 ♖d7 76.♖d5 ♙d6 77.♖e4 ♙a3 78.♖d5 ♖e7 79.♖e5 ♙b2+ 80.♖d5 ♖d7 81.♖c5 ♙e5 82.♖d5 ♙b8 83.♖c5 ♖e7 84.♖d5 ♖f7 85.♖c5 ♖f6 86.♖d5

Draw

Position with h6–g6 pawns

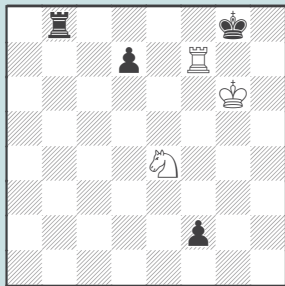


With a black pawn on h6 instead of h5, the position becomes much more difficult.

SOLUTION

Page 127

1.♖g6! The white king bravely goes forward, cutting off his counterpart and at the same time avoiding checks along the f-file. 1.♙d6+ doesn't lead to a win, since after 1...♖f8 2.♖f7+ (or 2.♖h1 ♖xb8 3.♖f6 f1♖+ 4.♖xf1 ♖b6=) 2...♖g8 3.♖g6 ♖xb8 4.♙e4



4...f1♖□ The only move that prevents, or to be more precise, postpones the deadly ♙f6+. 5.♖xf1 ♖b6+ 6.♙f6+ ♖f8 7.♖e1 ♖e6=. As is well known with such a correlation of the pieces remaining on the board, the stronger side can only win with a fair share of luck and by driving the opponent's king to the corner. Objectively, we have a draw on the board.

1...f1♖ 1...d5 2.♖e7+ ♖f8 3.♖f7+ ♖e8 4.♙d6+ ♖xd6+ 5.♙xd6+.

2.♖h8+ ♖f8 3.♖xf8+ There are no fruits for White after 3.♙d6+ ♖e7 4.♖xf8□=.

3...♖xf8 4.♙d6+ ♖e8 In case of 4...♖g8 it's not so difficult to calculate all the way to a checkmate: 5.♙e7+ ♖f8 6.♙f5+ ♖g8 7.♙h6+ ♖h8 8.♙e5#.

5.♙b6○



A very cute zugzwang and a picturesque final position! White is winning.

1-0



I deliberately placed the black pieces as optimally as possible. Nevertheless, the final assessment of the position is – a draw!

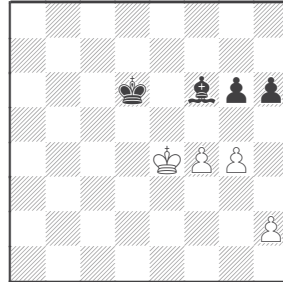
White threatens g3-g4 and then f4-f5, followed by either trading the g6-pawn or applying “drawing technique 4”. The second idea is to achieve h2-h4 followed by h4-h5 with a massive pawn exchange.

1...♙e1!? Preventing the advance of White’s h-pawn. Black could prevent g3-g4 by playing 1...h5, but after 2.♙f3!= we enter the Bukavshin – Moiseenko game.

The idea of 1...g5 is always easily refuted in view of 2.fxg5 hxg5 3.h4 g4 4.♙f4=. It’s pretty logical to try 1...♙d6 as with the black king on d6 White is unable to achieve f4-f5. Still, White has another resource in 2.h4! (or 2.g4=, transposing to more complex positions – see 1...♙e1 or 1...♙f6), with a simple draw: 2...♙e6 (2...♙e1 3.h5!; 2...♙f6 3.h5=; 2...h5 3.f5=) 3.g4! (3.h5? g5–+) 3...♙e7 4.g5 ♙g7 (4...hxg5 5.fxg5 ♙e6 6.h5=) 5.gxh6 ♙xh6 6.h5=.

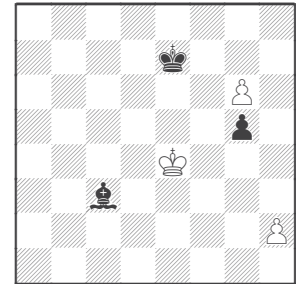
1...♙f6!? 2.g4 threatens f4-f5, trading the black g-pawn. (2.h4?? loses to 2...h5 3.♙f3 ♙f5–+. However, interesting is 2.♙f3!?, which can be followed by

2...♙d5 3.h4 when the h4-h5 break should be considered with each move, and so Black fails to drive white king away: 3...♙d6!? 4.♙e4 ♙e7!? 5.♙f3 ♙d7 6.♙e4 ♙d6 7.h5 g5 8.♙f5 ♙e7 9.♙g6=) 2...♙d6



Black has achieved an almost ideal placement of his pieces, but all the same there is a draw on the board. (2...♙e7 is met with 3.f5! g5 4.♙d5 ♙d7 5.h3= which is actually “drawing technique 4”; 2...g5 3.fxg5 hxg5 4.h4=; 2...♙h4 3.f5+=) 3.g5!! is both necessary and sufficient.

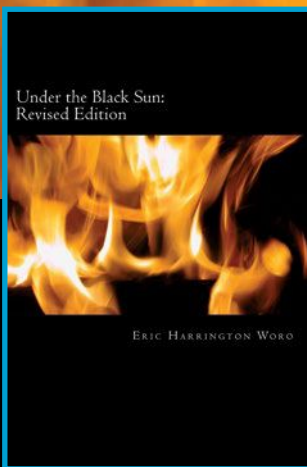
The same idea also works in case of the bishop on e7 or d8: 3...hxg5 (or 3...♙g7 4.gxh6 ♙xh6 5.h4 ♙e6 6.h5=) 4.f5! (4.fxg5 ♙xg5–+) 4...♙e7 (4...gxh5+ 5.♙xf5 ♙e7 6.h4=) 5.fxg6 ♙c3 (5...♙f8 6.h4 g4 7.♙f4=)



6.♙f5 (the immediate 6.h4 was maybe quicker, but let Black protect that pawn first.) 6...♙d2 7.h4=.

2.g4! 2.h4? h5–+; pointless is 2.♙f3? due to 2...♙d5! 3.♙e2 (3.h4 ♙e6 4.♙g4 ♙d2!–+; 3.g4 ♙d2–+) 3...♙c3 4.♙f3 ♙d4 5.h4 ♙f6–+.

2...g5!? Black cannot wait: 2...♙f2 3.f5+=; after 2...♙f6 White replies with 3.f5 g5 4.h3= transposing to “drawing technique 4”; or if 2...♙e7 then after 3.f5 g5 4.♙d5 ♙d7 5.h3= and we have another version of “drawing technique 4”. 2...♙d6 3.g5!! just forces a draw: 3...hxg5 (3...h5 4.f5=; a pawn sacrifice in case of 3...♙e6 also doesn’t pose any problems for White: 4.gxh6 ♙c3 5.h4 ♙f6 6.h5=) 4.fxg5 the white king goes to g4 and then the h-pawn will march forward: 4...♙e6



Under the Black Sun: Revised Edition a novel by Eric Harrington Woro

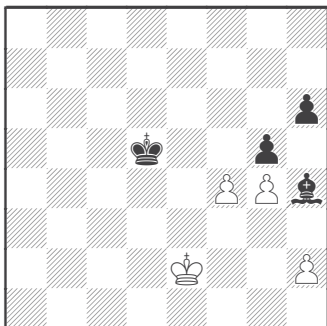
Order (Kindle or paperback) on Amazon or at www.ericworo.com

This is the story of a brilliant young chess master's descent into madness. The year is 1992. Bobby Fischer, former world chess champion, has emerged from retirement to play a rematch against Russian challenger Boris Spassky. Martin Fairchild, a chess prodigy with a bright future, works as a copy editor for *Caissa Times*, an international chess magazine published in La Jolla, California. Despite major tournament successes, Martin finds himself increasingly tormented by voices and exhibiting signs of the schizophrenia that overcame his suicidal father. His breakdown seems imminent when he discovers that he is being stalked by a female vampire.

5.♔f4 ♕d5 6.♖g4 ♕e4 7.h4 ♙xh4
8.♔xh4 ♕f4 9.♔h3 ♕xg5 10.♔g3=.

3.♔f3 On 3.f5+? ♕d6 Black wins since the white king fails to get to d5 before his counterpart; 3.fxg5? hxg5 4.♔d4 ♕d6 5.♔e4 ♕c5 6.♔f5 ♙h4+; or 3.♔e3 ♕d5 4.♔e2 transposes to the main line.

3...♕d5 4.♔e2 ♙h4



5.♔e3□ The bishop on h4 does not allow White to make an immediate draw by the undermining h2-h4. However, it is unable to help the black king as ...♙e1 is instantly met with ♔e2. It turns out that we have a pawn endgame with an opposition pattern (5.♔f3? ♕d4+).

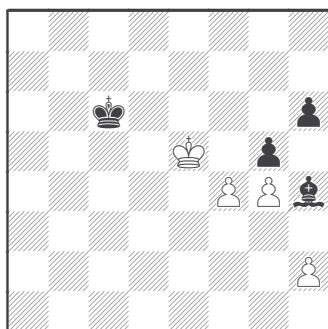
5...♔e6 6.♔e4 ♕d6 7.♔f3□ ♕d5
8.♔e3□ 8.h3? ♕d4+.

8...♔c4 8...♙e1 9.♔e2□ ♙c3 10.fxg5
hxg5 11.h4=.

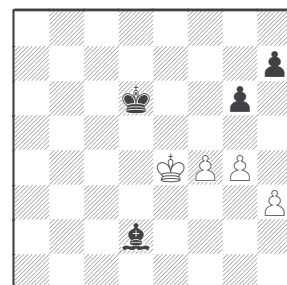
9.♔e4□ ♕c5 9...♙e1 10.♔f5 ♙d2
11.fxg5 hxg5 12.♔g6 ♕d5 13.♔h5 ♕e4
14.h4=.

10.♔e5□ It's important to retain the opposition on each and every move!

10...♔c6 10...♙e1 11.♔f5 ♙d2 12.fxg5
hxg5 13.♔g6 ♕d5 14.♔h5 ♕e4 15.h4=.



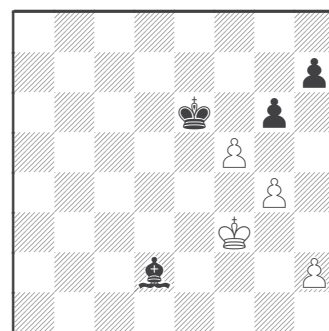
on d5 here; for 3.♔f3 ♕d5 - see the main line; while upon 3.h4 ♙e1 4.h5 ♙d2 5.♔f3 ♕d5+ eventually it is the black king that gets to this square and wins.)



Now, from the diagram, all of you should note the following very nice bishop maneuver, leading to a final zugzwang that allows the black king to infiltrate White's camp: 3...♙e1 4.♔d4 ♙h4 5.♔e4 ♙f6 6.♔e3 ♕d5 7.♔d3 ♙d4+.

2...♔f5 3.g4+ 3.h3 ♙e1 4.g4+ ♕e6
5.♔e4 ♕d6 6.♔d4 ♙h4 7.♔e4 ♙f6+.

3...♔e6 4.f5+ 4.♔e4 ♕d6 5.♔f3 ♕d5
6.h3 ♕d4+ Attentive readers will notice that in some of the previous examples, Black was trying precisely to avoid allowing this check. However, here there's no such fear.

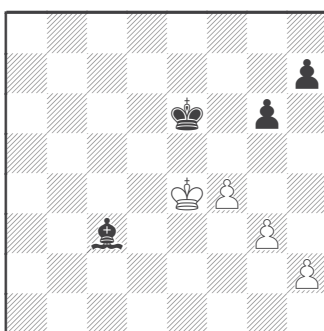


4...♔e5 This is playable so long as the black g-pawn remains alive on the board! And the glory goes to the h7-pawn.

5.fxg6 5.♔e2 ♙f4 6.h4 ♙g3+.

5...hxg6 6.♔g3 ♙e1+ 7.♔f3 ♙h4
8.♔e3 g5+ ■

Position with h7-g6 pawns



In order to maintain the authority of the bishop, we will consider the final position - with the pawn on h7. Here Black finally wins, not being afraid of any f4-f5 or h4-h5 push.

1...♙d2!? 2.♔f3 2.h4 h5+; 2.♔d3 ♙xf4!
3.gxf4 ♕f5+; 2.g4 ♕d6 3.h3 (After 3.f5 g5+ Black wins as the white king is not



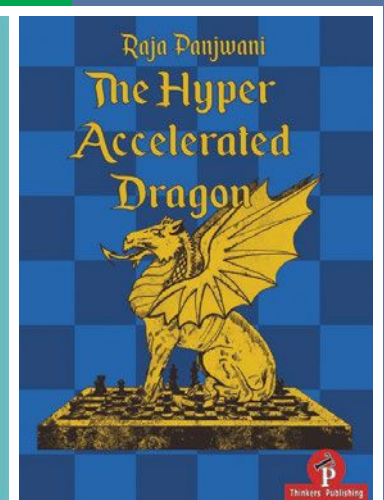
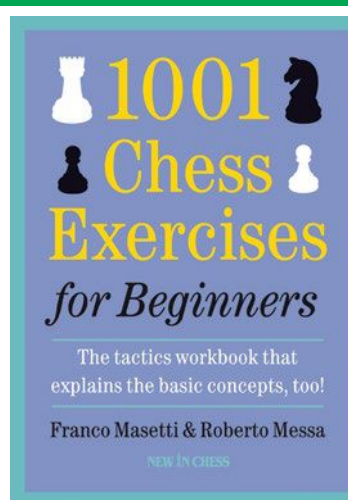
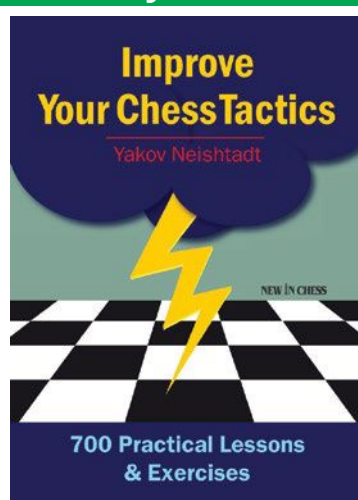
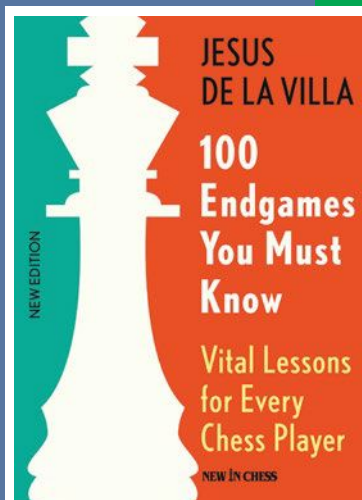
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MARSHALL CHESS CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

Nicholas Checa Conquers New York

By GM MICHAEL ROHDE

THE 16-YEAR-OLD PHENOM FROM WESTCHESTER COUNTY TIED FOR FIRST WITH GM SERGEI AZAROV WITH 7/9, AND THEN WENT ON TO WIN THE BLITZ PLAYOFF. OVERALL, AN IMPRESSIVE TOURNAMENT FOR THE VERY STRONG TEENAGERS CHECA, NIEMANN AND BRODSKY, WITH MANY OTHER YOUNG PLAYERS GAINING CRITICAL EXPERIENCE.

NYC's Marshall Chess Club held its 9-round Club Championship event on December 8-10 and 16-17. Many player/teachers (including me) missed the event due to coaching at the national scholastics, December 8-10, in Florida. But a number of strong young players skipped the winter pilgrimage to Disney World – choosing to play in a professional event instead – and performed very well indeed.

In the end, it was another great success for IM Nicolas Checa. The 16-year-old phenom from Westchester county tied for first with GM Sergei Azarov with 7/9, and Checa went on to win the blitz playoff. IM Djurabek Khamrakulov and 14-year-old FM Hans Niemann tied for 3rd with 6½.

The upsets started in the very first round, when Expert William Yen took on IM Justin Sarkar in a typically messy Grunfeld. Yen would go on to score 5/8 and was well positioned to grab a share of the U2400 prize if he didn't have a college assignment due which forced him to forfeit the last round.

D80

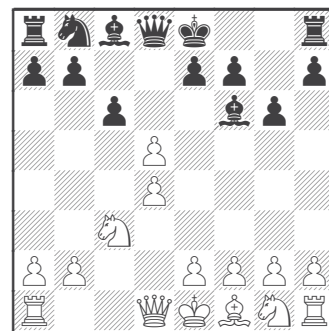
Justin Sarkar	2351
William Yen	1852

Round 1, MCCC 2017

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.♗g5 d5 5.♗xf6 ♗xf6 6.cxd5 6.♘xd5 does not appear to accomplish much. For

example, 6...♗g7 7.e3 c5 8.♘f3 0-0 9.♗e2 ♘c6 and Black will get the pawn back without too much trouble.

6...c6



7.e4 7.dxc6 ♘xc6 is too straightforward, since after 8.e3 0-0 9.♘f3 and White is



▶
 Nicholas
 Checa.
 Photo by
 Lennart
 Ootes.

better. However, in contrast, 7...♙xd4 seems to get enough compensation, e.g. 8.cxb7 ♙xb7 9.e3 ♙xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♙a5 11.♙b3 0-0 12.♘f3 ♘a6 13.♙e2 ♙ab8 14.♙c2 ♙e4 15.♙c1 ♙fc8 recovering the pawn.

7.♙c1 may be White's most promising option. Then 7...0-0 8.dxc6 ♙xd4 9.♙xd4 ♙xd4 10.cxb7 ♙xb7 11.♘f3 ♙f6 12.e3 ♘d7 13.♙b5 and White may get away with the extra pawn.

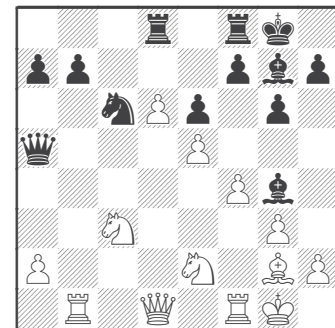
7...♙b6 7...0-0 seems playable in the line 8.e5 ♙g7 9.♙c4 b5 10.♙b3 b4.

8.e5 ♙xb2 9.♘ge2 ♙g7 10.♙b1 ♙a3 11.g3 11.♙d2 is much better because then if the white knight on c3 makes it up to d5, it won't have to retreat immediately as in the game. 11...0-0 12.g3 f6 13.exf6 ♙xf6 14.♙g2 and White has the better chances.

11...cxd5 12.♘xd5 ♙a5+ By driving back the white knight, Black gains the initiative.

13.♘dc3 ♘c6 14.♙g2 0-0 15.f4 Played in order to answer 15...♙d8 with 16.d5, but a further weakness is created.

15...♙g4 16.0-0 ♙ad8 17.d5 e6 18.d6

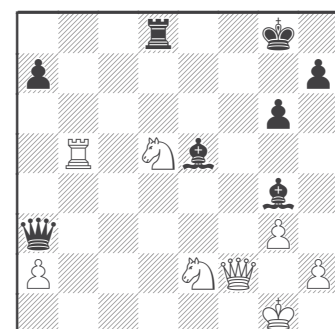


18...f6 Excellently played. The destruction of White's pawn chain will create big trouble on the diagonals. Particularly, ...♙a5-c5+ is a resource that Black can activate on demand.

19.♙xb7 fxe5 20.♙b5 Given that d6 is collapsing, the text is an attempt not to end up a pawn down. Not 20.♙xc6?? ♙c5+.

20...♙a3 21.♙xc6 ♙xd6 22.♙d5 exd5 23.fxe5 ♙xf1+ 24.♙xf1 ♙d8 25.♘xd5 25.♙f4 does not work after 25...♙xe2 26.♘xe2 ♙xa2, when 27.♙b7 fails to 27...♙f8.

25...♙xe5 26.♙f2



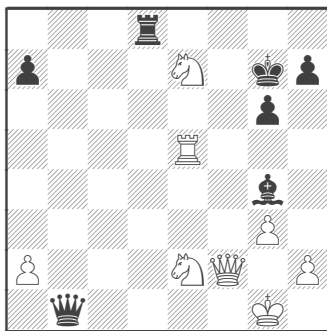
This position is a dramatic illustration of an open position where two bishops are destroying two knights.

26...♖d3 Hitting multiple objects and a fascinating sequence, but there was a stronger way. 26...a6 27.♖c5

A) 27...♗b2 is winning although it is difficult to calculate as White gets to throw some pieces around after 28.♖e7+ ♗g7 29.♗e3 ♖d6 30.♖f5+.

B) However, 27...♗xe2 would be the much easier way to bring this to a close after 28.♖e7+ ♗g7 29.♗xe5 ♖d1+ 30.♗g2 ♖f1+.

27.♖e7+ ♗g7 28.♗xe5 ♖b1+



29.♗g2 29.♖c1 was the way to resist as it takes the black queen off some of the checking diagonals. Then after 29...♗xc1+ 30.♖e1 ♗d2 Black still has the edge.

29...♗b7+ 30.♖d5 ♖xd5 31.♖xd5 ♗xd5+ 32.♖f1 ♗d1+ 33.♗e1 ♖xe2+ 34.♖f2 ♗xe1+ 35.♖xe1 ♖c4

White resigned

A fantastic performance was turned in by 13-year-old WIM Evelyn Zhu. After a first round half-point bye, Evelyn drew with GM Sergey Kudrin in round 2, and then successively defeated FM Jon Jacobs and IM Jay Bonin! Evelyn finished the event with 5 points.

Both Yen and Zhu had pre-event FIDE ratings in the 1800s but US Chess ratings a little shy of 2100. Inaccurately low FIDE ratings have become commonplace lately due to young players not having enough opportunities to play in FIDE-rated events. This creates difficulties for norm-seekers or just about anyone who expects their own rating to reasonably reflect the strength they are demonstrating.

Hans Niemann oscillates between very aggressive tactical play and very patient positional play. In his 4th round

game against GM Irina Krush, Hans was not afraid to mix it up.

D43

Hans Niemann	2297
Irina Krush	2431

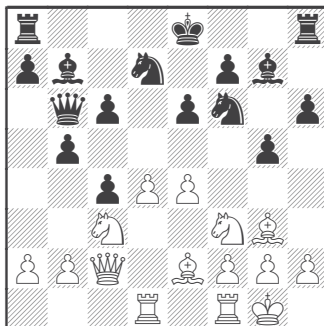
Round 4, MCCC 2017

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♖f3 d5 4.♖c3 c6 5.♖g5 h6 The Moscow Variation, which aims to take the gambit pawn on c4 under better circumstances, in the event that White rejects the trade of bishop for knight.

6.♖h4 dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.♖g3 b5 9.♖e2 ♖b7 10.♗c2 Niemann prefers a restrained approach for now. 10.h4 g4 11.♖e5 is the most popular line.

10...♖bd7 11.♖d1 Probably the best argument in favor of this move is that 11.0-0 encourages 11...♖h5 whereas here 11...♖h5 runs into 12.d5.

11...♗b6 12.0-0 ♖g7



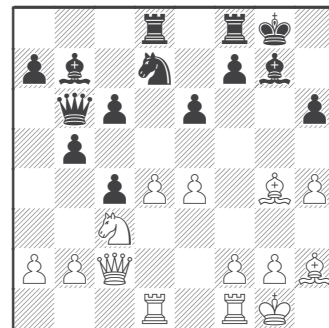
13.h4 13.e5 is the direct reaction that I would prefer, eyeing the d6 square which Black just temporarily abandoned. 13...♖h5 (13...♖d5 14.♖e4 0-0 looks very dangerous, but perhaps that is the kind of brinkmanship that is required in this line.) 14.♖e4 ♖xg3 (14...0-0 is no good due to 15.♖exg5.) 15.♖d6+ is unclear.

13.♖d6 is also a logical retort to Black's last. 13...♖h5 would be an artful response, looking to use f4 as a foil to White's emphasis on d6. But 13...c5 is too reckless after 14.e5 ♖d5 15.dxc5 ♖xc5 16.♖xb5 ♗xb5 17.♖xc4.

13...g4 14.♖e5 ♖d8 15.♖h2 The idea of this is to be able to play ♖e5xd7 followed by e4-e5 without the black knight being able to tag White's

dark-squared bishop in response. 15.♖a4 ♗a5 16.♖xd7 ♖xd7 17.♖c5 ♖xc5 18.dxc5 looks unclear after 18...♖xd1 19.♖xd1 ♗b4.

15...0-0 16.♖xd7 ♖xd7 17.♖xg4

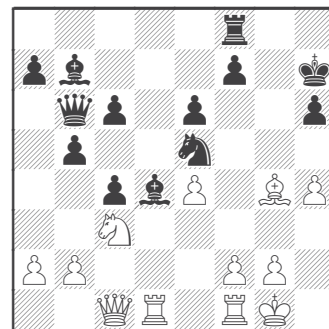


17...♖xd4 By wiping out White's center, Krush has won the positional battle, but now comes some play against the kingside.

18.♗c1 ♖h7 18...♗g7 provokes a surprising tactical sequence: 19.♖f4 ♖h8 20.♖xh6+ ♖xh6 21.♖xd4 ♗xd4 22.♗g5+ ♖g6 23.♗xd8 ♖xg4 24.♖d1 ♗f6 25.♖xd7 ♗xd8 26.♖xd8 b4 27.♖d7 bxc3 28.bxc3 and the apparent dynamic equality continues.

19.♖d6 ♖e5 19...♖g8 does not work well due to 20.♗f4 ♖f6 21.♖c7 which forces Black into the unsatisfactory 21...♖xg4 22.♖xb6 ♖xf4 23.♖xd8 ♖xc3 24.bxc3 ♖xe4 25.♖d7 ♖xc3 26.♖e1 ♖c8 27.♖c7.

20.♖xf8 ♖xf8

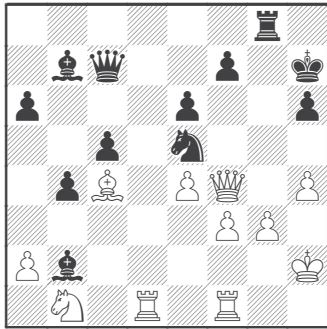


Black has only a pawn for the exchange, but also the advantage due to her massive presence in the center.

21.♖e2 c5 22.♖h2 22.♗f4 is also not inspiring due to 22...♖g6 or 22...b4 23.♖xd4 ♖g6.

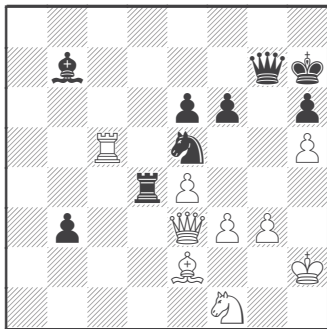
22...♖g8 22...b4 can be played immediately and the weakness of e4 gives Black a nice situation.

23. ♖f4 ♜c7 While threatening of course 24... ♗g4+, after White's reply, this move actually turns out to be a self-pin. 23...b4 24. ♖xd4 was no longer clear but 23...f6 would have been a good way to stabilize the knight on e5.
24.g3 a6 25.f3 b4 26. ♖b1 ♙xb2 27. ♙xc4



Black is still better but White has for now eliminated the most dangerous of Black's threats.

27... ♖e7 27... ♗d4 (enabling 28... ♗e3) 28 ♗e2 ♖a5, going after queenside material, was another good way to continue.
28. ♗e2 f6 29. ♖d2 ♗d4 30.h5 a5 30... ♖f7 31. ♖h4 (trying to get in f3-f4) 31...f5 was still nice for Black, with tremendous activity.
31. ♖h4 ♖g7 32. ♖c2 a4 33. ♗d2 ♙c3 34. ♖fc1 ♖d8 35. ♗f1 ♗d4 36. ♖xc5 ♙xc5 37. ♖xc5 ♖d4 37... ♗a6 is a winning diversion.
38. ♖f4 Now White is okay.
38...b3 Better was a rook retreat or 38... ♖e7.
39. ♖xb3 ♖xb3 40. ♖e3



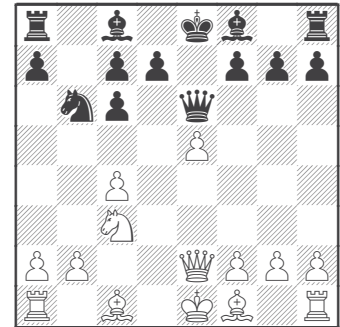
Suddenly Black is in trouble.

40... ♖b4 40...b2 41. ♖b5 ♗a6 42. ♖xb2 ♗xe2 43. ♖xe2 and Black is a pawn down but can try to resist.
41. ♖c3 Shocked by the turn of events resulting in this double attack, Krush



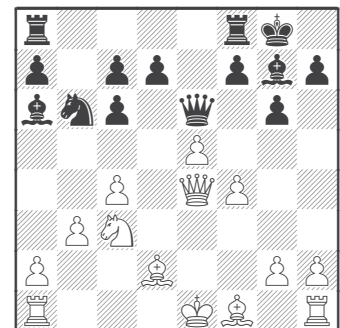
Irina Krush, Baku 2016.
Photo by Andreas Kontokanis.

6... ♖e7 7. ♖e2 ♗d5 8.c4 ♖b6 8... ♗a6 is the main line. 9.b3 g6 10.g3 is one typical continuation.
9. ♗c3 ♖e6



10. ♖e4 10. ♗d2 is a more conservative move which is probably preferable. The idea is that if Black plays the direct ... ♗c8-a6, then White can just play b2-b3 and then develop with g2-g3. On the other hand, if Black tries 10...a5 (10... ♗a6 11.b3), then the extravagant maneuver with 11. ♖e2-e4 might be justified after 11... ♗a6 12.b3.

10...g6 11. ♗d2 ♗a6 12.b3 ♗g7 13.f4 0-0 13...d5 is not good due to 14.cxd5 cxd5 15. ♗xd5 ♗xd5 16. ♖a4+.



14.c5 This discovery/double attack is one of the principal tactical motifs in the Scotch. But this line is just not that promising here. The alternatives are not that great either, as White needs to get his king out of the center while policing both f-pawn and d-pawn breaks. 14. ♗f2 f6 is fine for Black, and 14.0-0 d5 also leaves White looking to trade down into a rough equality at best.

resigned. After 41... ♖b6 42. ♖c7 ♗d7 (if 42... ♗f7 43. ♖c5) 43. ♗d2 b2 44. ♗c4 is very strong.

Black resigned

And the enterprising 15-year-old IM David Brodsky also scored an important win in round 4.

C45

Djurabek Khamrakulov	2496
David Brodsky	2392

Round 4, MCCC 2017

1.e4 e5 2. ♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 exd4 4. ♗xd4 ♗f6 5. ♗xc6 bxc6 6.e5 6. ♗c3 was tried by Khamrakulov against me in a fast-time-control game. It is midway between 5. ♗c3 ♗b4 (in which Black institutes a pin, not to trade the dark-squared bishop, but to pressurize e4), and 5. ♗xc6 bxc6 (in which the issue of e4 is usually mooted by e4-e5). 6...d6 Why play ... ♗f8-b4 when Black has already achieved the trade which graduated the b7 pawn to c6? 7. ♗f4 g6 8. ♖f3 was the continuation of that game.

14...♙xf1 15.cxb6 15...♖xf1 ♔d5 16.0-0-0 f6 17.♙e1 and White is struggling to maintain equality.

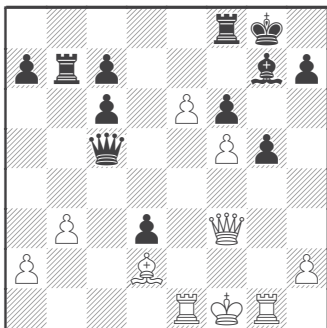
15...♔d5 16.♖e3 An attempt to improve on 16.♖f3 ♙a6, where Black's bishops are generating good play, as after the text 16...♙a6 can be met by 17.bxa7. And White has a tactic ready on 16...♙xg2.

16...♙xg2 17.♖g1 ♙h3 18.b7 ♖ab8 19.♔a4 In return for the fractured kingside, White has now preserved the b-pawn.

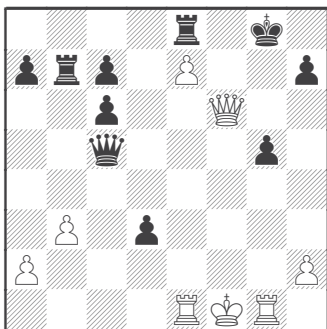
19...f6 20.♔c5 ♖e7 21.e6 d4 A predictable interference to break White's grip on the center.

22.♖xh3 ♖xc5 23.f5 d3 24.♙f1 g5 25.♖f3 25...♖g3 was critical to keep the balance by going after the d3 pawn while trying to preserve the white pawn on f5. 25...♖fd8 26.♖c1 ♖b5 27.♖c4 ♔d5 leads to continuing complications.

25...♖xb7 26.♖c1 ♖e5 27.♖e1 ♖c5



28.♙xg5 The sacrifice does not work. White can get the piece back, but will then be down several pawns. 28.♖c1 ♖d5 might be tried, rather than the repetition. 28...fxf5 29.e7 ♖e8 30.f6 ♙xf6 31.♖xf6



31...♖b5 The key move that ends White's attack.

32.♖g2 ♖f5+ 33.♖xf5 ♖xf5+ 34.♖f2 ♖d5 35.♖d2 ♙f7 36.♖e3 ♖xe7 37.♖exd3 ♖ed7 38.♖f2+ ♙g6 39.♖c3 c5 40.♙g2 h5 41.♖e3 g4 42.h4 gxh3+

43.♙h2 ♖7d6 44.♖e7 ♖d2 45.♖xd2 ♖xd2+ 46.♙xh3 ♖xa2 47.♖xc7 ♖c2 48.♙g3 ♙f5 49.♙f3 h4 50.♖f7+ ♙e5 51.♙g4 ♖c3

White resigned

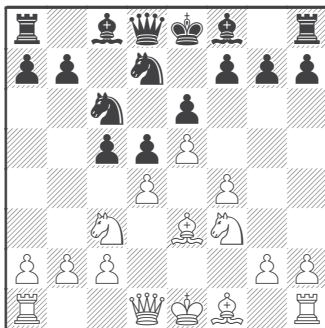
But then, in round 5, Brodsky ran into Niemann's polished technique in this colorful ending, which brought Niemann into the lead with 4½/5.

C11

David Brodsky	2392
Hans Niemann	2297

Round 5, MCCC 2017

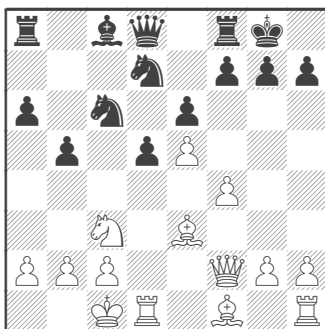
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♔c3 ♔f6 4.e5 ♔fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♔f3 ♔c6 7.♙e3



7...cxd4 This is a solid line. 7...♖b6 is no longer fashionable, as 8.♔a4 ♖a5+ 9.c3 cxd4 10.b4 ♔xb4 11.cxb4 ♙xb4+ 12.♔d2 ♙xd2+ 13.♔xd2 b6 14.♔d3 ♙a6 (14...♔c5 is also not promising after 15.♔xc5 bxc5 16.0-0 where ...c5-c4 fails to ♔d3xc4.) 15.♔b2 ♔c5 16.♙xa6 and Black seems stymied after 16...♖xa6 17.♔b3.

7...a6 8.♖d2 b5 9.dxc5 ♙xc5 10.♙xc5 ♔xc5 11.♖f2 ♖b6 is one popular line.

8.♔xd4 ♙c5 9.♖d2 0-0 10.0-0-0 ♙xd4 11.♙xd4 a6 12.♖f2 b5 13.♙e3



NEW YORK, NY

December 8-17, 2017

101st MCC Championship/
Edward Lasker Memorial

Tie-break match (blitz):
N.Checa - S.Azarov 1½-½

1-2. Nicolas CHECA, Sergei AZAROV 7,
3-4. Djurabek KHAMRAKULOV,
Hans NIEMANN 6½,
5-6. Robert PEREZ,
David BRODSKY 6,
7. Anton OSINENKO 5½,
8-12. Sergey KUDRIN, Victor SHEN,
Jay BONIN, Evelyn ZHU,
William YEN 5,
13-20. Justin SARKAR, Stanislav
BUSYGIN, Majur JUAC, Martha
SAMADASHVILI, George BERG,
Robert OLSEN Jr, Paris PRESTIA,
Bora YAGIZ 4½,
21-23. Irina KRUSH, Vincent TSAY,
Jason LU 4, etc.

White preserves the major advantage of the two bishops, but Black has been able to get his attack off the ground.

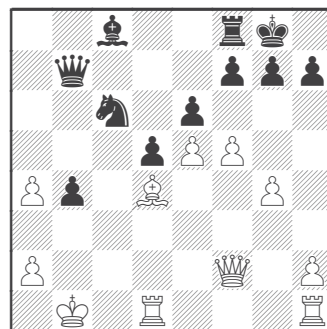
13...♖a5 14.♙b1 b4 15.♔e2 ♖c7 16.♔d4 ♔xd4 17.♙xd4 a5 17...♙b7 18.♔d3 ♖ac8 19.h4 seems to leave White in control.

18.♙b5 a4 19.b3 axb3 20.cxb3 ♖b7 21.♙a4

21...♖xa4 A speculative exchange sacrifice for both offensive and defensive purposes. White's structure is degraded, but also, without doing this, Black had trouble mobilizing as 21...♔b8 would run into 22.♙c5.

22.bxa4 ♔b8 22...b3 is not good because of 23.♖b2 bxa2+ 24.♙a1 and White's major pieces flow into the queenside.

23.g4 ♔c6 24.f5





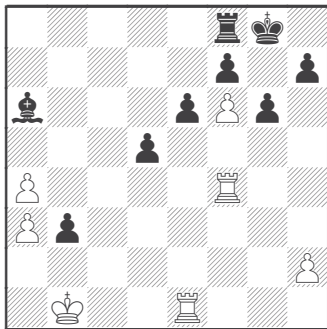
24...b3 Again trying to create chaos in the face of White's own threat to create a mating attack with f5-f6.

25.a3 Logical. White also had other moves emphasizing his dark-square control, including 25.f6, 25.♙c5, and 25.♙a1.

25...♙xd4 25...♙a6 was also possible, representing a less frantic attempt to distract White from the growing kingside counterplay.

26.♙xd4 ♙c7 27.f6 I don't think White can afford this. 27.♙e1 would keep the edge in White's hands.

27...♙xe5 28.g5 g6 29.♙e1 ♙xg5 30.♙f4 ♙xf4 31.♙xf4 ♙a6



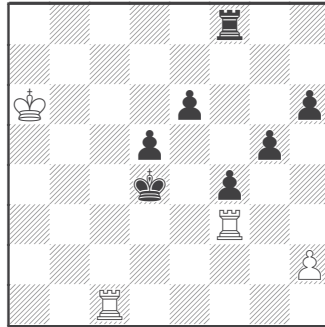
The smoke has cleared, and while White has a monster passed a-pawn and a restricting pawn on f6, Black's numerous pawns now have to be reckoned with.

32.♙b4 ♙c4 33.♙b2 h6 34.♙c3 ♙h7 35.♙d4 g5 36.♙c5 The king is needed in order to get paid on the queenside.

36...♙g6 37.♙b6 ♙a8 38.♙b7 ♙a5 39.♙b6 ♙a6+ 40.♙b7 ♙xf6 41.♙b1 ♙d6 42.a5 ♙e5 43.a4 ♙d4 44.♙1xb3 ♙a6 Having already shown great patience, Niemann begins to assert with nuanced endgame tactics.

45.♙f3 ♙xa5 46.♙b6 ♙a8 47.♙b7 ♙f8 refusing the draw.

48.a5 ♙c5 49.♙b1 f5 50.♙c1 ♙d4 51.a6 ♙xa6+ 52.♙xa6 f4



Entering the home stretch with basically four passed pawns against the extra rook.

53.♙ff1 e5 54.♙b6 e4 55.♙fd1+ ♙e5 56.♙c5 ♙d8 57.♙c7 e3 58.♙c5 ♙e4 59.♙e7+ ♙f3 60.♙d4 ♙a8 61.♙f1+ ♙e2 62.♙b1 ♙a2 63.♙xd5 ♙f2 64.♙e4 f3 65.♙f5 ♙a4 66.♙g6 ♙h4 67.♙h1 g4 68.♙e4 h5 69.♙g5 ♙h3 70.♙f4 e2 71.♙e5 g3

White resigned

This set up a round 6 showdown between

Checa (4/5) and Niemann (4½/5). Checa had gotten there by defeating Robert Perez in round 4 and drawing with Azarov in Round 5. Against Niemann, Checa's very solid play was on display as Black in a Queen's Indian where potentially hanging pawns later became a strong central force.

E18

Hans Niemann	2297
Nicolas Checa	2474

Round 6, MCCC 2017

1.d4 ♙f6 2.c4 e6 3.♙f3 b6 4.g3 ♙b7 5.♙g2 ♙e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♙c3 ♙e4 8.♙xe4 8...♙d2 is the modern line which holds White's formation to continue to exert influence over the d5 square. 8.♙c2 is the old main line. It is worth noting that after 8...♙xc3, the tricky 9.♙g5 with a double attack against h7 and b7 fails to 9...♙xe2+ which breaks White's coordination and wins material.

8...♙xe4 Now the bishop cannot be blocked by d4-d5.

9.♙e1 ♙xg2 10.♙xg2 d5 11.cxd5 11.♙a4 dxc4 12.♙xc4 c5 is very close to equal.

11...exd5 12.♙f4 12.♙f4 c6 13.♙e3 ♙d6 and with c6 easy to cover and nothing else to worry about, again equality is in sight.



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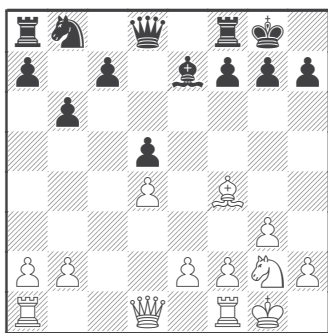


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12...a5 A remarkable approach and apparently a new move in this position. Checa gains space but also commits to the advance ...c7-c5.

13.♖c1 ♘a6 14.♙a4 Possibly envisioning taking up a post on b5.

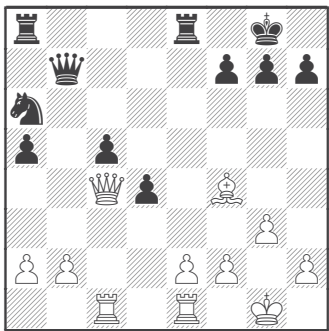
14...c5 15.♗fd1 ♕f6 16.♙e3 ♜e8 17.dxc5 17...♗b5 c4 (17...♙e4 also should be satisfactory in the event of **18.dxc5 ♜b4 19.♗d3 ♙xb2**) **18.♘f4 ♘c7 19.♗xb6 ♜b8 20.♗xa5 ♙xb2** and Black's protected passed pawn makes up for White's extra pawn.

17.♘f4 ♜e4 and the lateral pin holds White up **18.h4** with dynamic equality.

17...bxc5 18.♘f4 18...♙xc5 is too precarious for White after **18...♙xe2 19.♙d4 ♘b4**.

18...d4 19.♙d2 ♙g5 20.♗c4 20...♙xa5 is weak after **20...♗d6**.

20...♙xf4 21.♙xf4 ♗e7 22.♜e1 ♗b7



After the recent flurry of tactics and finesse, we enter a positional phase in which the black knight gains some wings. **23.b3 ♘b4 24.a3 ♘a2 25.♜c2 ♘c3** Keeping up the counter-threats rendering the c-pawn invulnerable.

26.♙d2 ♘e4 27.♜ec1 h5 28.♙e1 The bishop was unable to get comfortable and finally goes into an abject retreat.

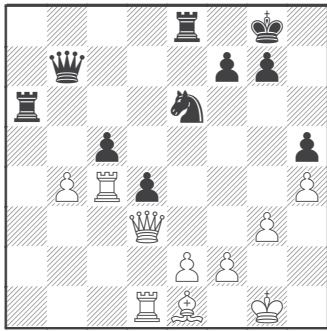
28...♘g5 29.h4 ♘e6

Finally the knight reaches the ideal location from which to actually defend the c-pawn.



▲ Sergei Azarov. Photo by Harald Fietz.

30.♜d1 ♗e4 31.♗d3 ♗b7 32.♜c4 ♜a6 33.b4 A blunder. **33.♙d2** was okay. **33...axb4 34.axb4**



34...♘f4 This is winning.

35.gxf4 ♜g6+ 36.♗xg6 fxg6 37.bxc5 ♗c8 38.♜cxd4 ♗g4+ 39.♘h2 ♗xh4+ 40.♘g2 ♗g4+ 41.♘h2 ♜xe2 42.♜d8+ ♘h7 43.♜f8 h4 44.♜d3 ♜xe1 45.♜dd8 ♗g1+

White resigned

In the 7th round, Azarov moved into the lead with 6 points with a victory over Krush. Niemann rebounded into a tie for 2nd with 5½ (by winning against Perez), with

Checa (who drew with IM Victor Shen). Meanwhile, WFM Martha Samadashvili took her shot against Bonin, and notched a draw, while another young talent, Paris Prestia, took on the popular chess teacher Juan Sena (see game below).

A05

Irina Krush

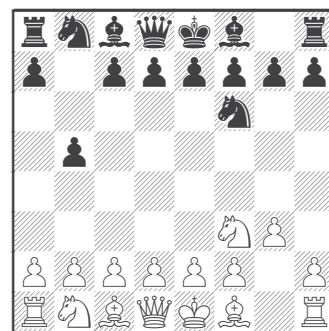
2431

Sergei Azarov

2555

Round 7, MCCC 2017

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 b5



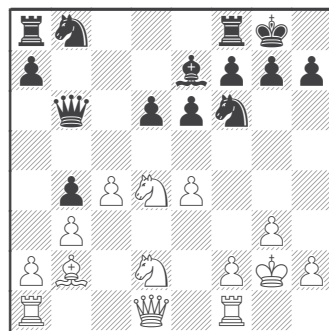
In this circumstance, the "Polish" move ...b7-b5 is appropriate because the long diagonal opposition of bishops is desirable. By contrast, on **1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.d4**, then **2...b5** would be weak for several reasons, including **3.♙g5**.

3.♙g2 ♙b7 4.0-0 e6 5.b3 5.d4 c5 6.a4 b4 7.c3 ♘a6 is one example of how relatively smooth this opening is for Black.

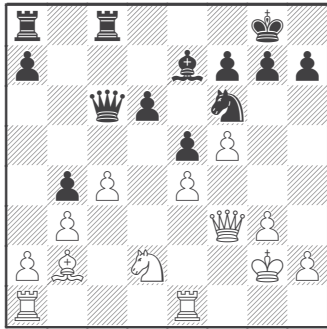
5...c5 6.c4 b4 7.♙b2 ♙e7 8.d4 Interesting was **8.d3** with the idea of **9.e4**. Then on **8...d5 9.♘bd2** keeps White's options open for a later **d3-d4**.

8...cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♙xg2 10.♘xg2 ♗b6 A type of Hedgehog has arisen where Black's pawn has been run forward to **b4** but he has **c5** securely under control.

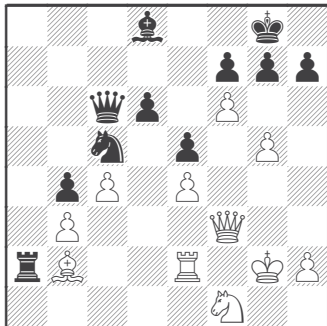
11.♘d2 0-0 12.e4 d6



13.f4 The position seems a little too airy to support this kind of aggression. And White was not ready for 13.a3 because Black simply snaps it. So perhaps 13.♖e2 ♘bd7 14.♘df3 playing for e4-e5 could be tried.
13...♙c6 14.♙xc6 ♖xc6 15.♗f3 ♜fc8 16.f5 e5 17.♞fe1



17...a5 Black is very solid here and the coming ...a5-a4 is annoying.
18.♙f1 ♙d8 19.g4 a4 20.g5 ♘d7 21.f6 axb3 22.axb3 ♞xa1 23.♙xa1 ♞a8 24.♙b2 ♞a2 25.♞e2 ♙c5



26.fxg7 26.♘g3 is not an improvement due to 26...♙e6 anyway.
26...♙e6 27.♙h1 ♘xg5 28.♗g2 ♙e6 29.♗f3 ♗a8 30.h3 ♙g5 31.♞f2 ♙f4 32.♞e2 ♙g5 33.♗g2 ♙xe4 34.♙g1 ♙c3
White resigned

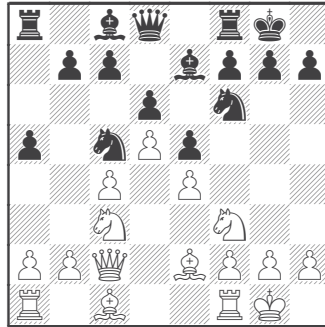
A53

Paris Prestia	1665
Juan Sena	2034

Round 7, MCCC 2017

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♙c3 ♘bd7 4.e4 e5 5.d5 ♙c5 6.♗c2 a5 7.♙f3 ♙e7 Also good was 7...♙g7 which reflects a more aggressive long-term approach to getting in ...f7-f5 later.

8.♙e2 0-0 9.0-0



9...h6 To support the well-posted knight on c5, Black should strive to get in ...f7-f5 quickly. Possible was 9...♙e8 10.♙e3 b6 following up with ...g7-g6, ...♙e8-g7 and ...f7-f5.

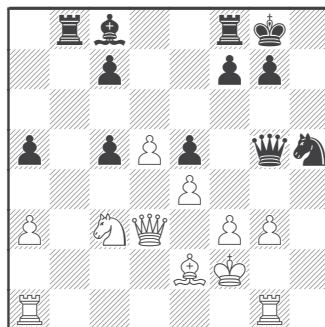
10.♙e3 b6 11.♙e1 I would prefer 11.b3 constructing a plan to push back the c5 knight.

11...♙h7 12.f3 ♙g5 13.♙f2 h5 A good plan. Now 13...f5 14.♙xc5 bxc5 15.exf5 ♙xf5 16.♙d3 is satisfactory for White.
14.♙d3 h4 15.a3 ♙f6 16.b4 ♙xd3 17.♙xd3 ♙h5 18.g3 hxg3 19.hxg3 ♗f6 20.♙e2 ♗h6 21.c5 bxc5 Well played, as Black reserves for himself the possibility of ...♙c8-a6 later.

22.bxc5 ♙e3 23.♗d3 A desperate resource.

23...♙xc5 Not 23...♙xg3 24.♙xe3; or 23...♙xf2+ 24.♙xf2. But Black missed the crushing 23...♙d4 as on 24.♙xd4 (24.♙g2 loses to 24...♙h3+) 24...exd4, g3 falls.

24.♙xc5 dxc5 25.♙f2 ♗g5 26.♞g1 ♞b8



27.♗e3 Having survived the first wave of the attack, White begins to focus on the weakie on c5.

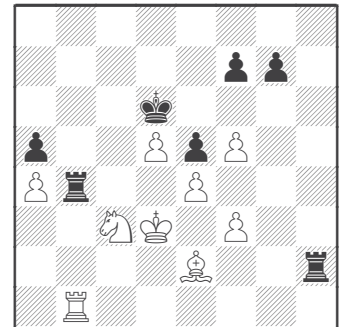
27...♙f4 It was reasonable to be unwilling to retreat here.

28.gxf4 ♗h4+ 29.♙f1 ♙h3+ 30.♞g2

♙xg2+ 31.♙xg2 ♞b6 31...exf4 was the right way, with an unclear position after 32.♗f2 ♗f6.

32.f5 ♞h6 33.♞g1 ♞b8 34.♙b5 Now White has stabilized.

34...♞h5 35.♙f1 ♗h3+ 36.♙e1 ♗h2 37.♗xc5 ♗f4 38.a4 ♞h2 39.♙d1 c6 40.♗xc6 ♗e3 41.♞e1 ♞b6 42.♗c3 ♗xc3 43.♙xc3 ♞b4 44.♙c2 ♙f8 45.♞b1 ♙e7 46.♙d3 ♙d6



47.♙b5+ ♙d7 48.♞xb4 axb4 49.♙d1 ♞f2 50.♙c4 ♞f1 51.♙b3 ♞xf3 52.♙xb4 g5 53.fxg6 fxg6 54.a5 g5 55.a6 ♙c8 56.a7

Black resigned

Round 8 saw Niemann suddenly catapult back into a tie for the lead with Azarov, each with 6½/8, as Niemann won against Shen while Azarov – Khamrakulov and Checa – Kudrin were draws.

In round 9, Azarov held with a Kan or Taimanov Sicilian against an aggressive David Brodsky to edge his way into 7 points. On Board 2, Niemann was White against Khamrakulov and had a shot at winning the tournament clear. But I couldn't see the game because I don't like being part of a crowd peering over Board 3 to see Board 2; the Marshall should liberate Board 2 from that corner. Eventually, Khamrakulov won. Meanwhile, Checa, who had entered the last round with 6 (a half point behind the leaders), was playing defense against Sarkar's imposing center (not sure if Sarkar had sacrificed a pawn for that position). But Checa's typically solid play enabled him to emerge victorious.

Overall, an impressive tournament for the very strong teenagers Checa, Niemann and Brodsky, with many other young players gaining critical experience and scoring significant upsets as well. ■

Igor's Chess Doubles

by **IM Igor Khmelnsky**

Solutions on page **148**

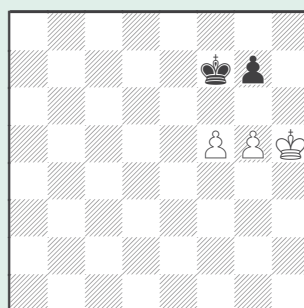


I'd like to introduce you to series of special exercises that I have been designing for many years to help my students in improving their tactical vision, calculation and defensive skills. Readers of my award winning Chess Exam and Training Guide and other books know that I have a passion for creating chess puzzles that serve multiple purposes. Well, these exercises will open your eyes on nuances of chess tactics and help you to jump start your calculation skills. At the same time, the exercises are fun and not overly complex. Anyone should be able to follow them without a chessboard.

For each pair

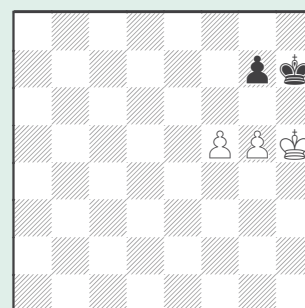
1. See who is to move.
2. Answer the question - Does Black prefer position A, position B or indifferent? Explain why.

1A - Easy



Black to Move

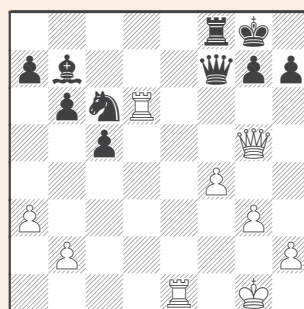
1B - Easy



Black to Move

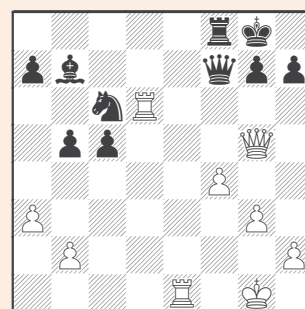
3
points

2A - Moderate



Black to Move

2B - Moderate



Black to Move

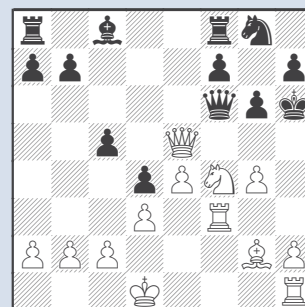
6
points

3A - Hard



White to Move

3B - Hard



White to Move

8
points

TOURNAMENT REVIEW

DECEMBER 2017 - FEBRUARY 2018

MILPITAS, CA

December 15-17, 2017

Winter Championship (5 rounds)

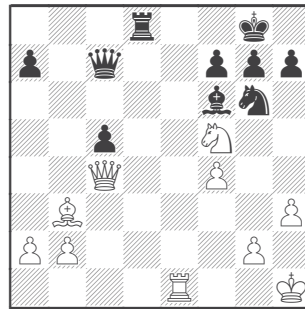
1-2. Mark PARAGUA,
Cameron WHEELER $4\frac{1}{2}$,
3. Teddy COLEMAN 4,
4-6. Conrad HOLT, Ivan KE,
Conrado DIAZ $3\frac{1}{2}$,
7-11. Philipp PEREPELTSKY,
David RUPEL, Steven ZIERK, Ezra
CHAMBERS, Eliam CHANG 3, etc.

Cameron Wheeler 2384
Conrad Holt 2568

Winter Championship

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♟f3 ♟f6 4.e3 e6
5.♟d3 dxc4 6.♟xc4 ♟bd7 7.0-0
♟d6 8.♟c3 0-0 9.♟c2 e5 10.♟d1
♟c7 11.h3 exd4 12.♟xd4 ♟e5
13.♟b3 ♟e8 14.e4 ♟g6 15.♟f5 ♟h2+
16.♟h1 ♟e5 17.♟g5 ♟e6 18.♟xf6
♟xf6 19.♟d5 ♟xd5 20.exd5 ♟ad8

21.dxc6 bxc6 22.♟xd8 ♟xd8 23.♟e1
♟e5 24.f4 ♟g6 25.♟c4 c5



26.♟e7 ♟xe7 27.♟h6+ ♟h8 28.♟xf7+
♟g8 29.♟xd8+ ♟h8 30.♟f7+ ♟g8
31.♟g5+ ♟h8 32.♟b5 1-0

▼ Mark Paragua. Photo by David Llada.



RICHARDSON, TX

December 23-24, 2017

DCC FIDE Open XI (5 rounds)

1-2. Ruifeng LI, Gil POPILSKI $4\frac{1}{2}$,
3. Kevin LIU 4,
4-6. Zurab JAVAKHADZE, Justin WANG,
Rithik POLAVARAM $3\frac{1}{2}$,
7-13. Bovey LIU, Hiren PREMKUMAR,
Ricky WANG, Rohit BANDI,
David PHILLIPS, Chase FRUTOS,
Rayan MAHIN 3, etc.

LAS VEGAS, NV

December 26-30, 2017

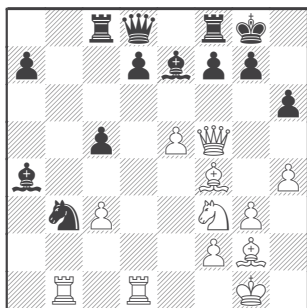
27th North American Open (9 rounds)

1-5. Robert HESS, Samuel SEVIAN,
Ruifeng LI, Arun SUBRAMANIAN,
Dionisio ALDAMA 7,
6-8. Elshan MORADIABADI,
Advait PATEL, John BRYANT $6\frac{1}{2}$,
9-19. Ehsan GHAEM MAGHAMI,
Atanas KOLEV, Fidel CORRALES,
Denys SHMELOV, Craig HILBY,
Farai MANDIZHA, Mika BRATTAIN,
Cameron WHEELER, Zhaozhi LI,
Ben LI, Andrew HONG 6, etc.

Cameron Wheeler 2384
Ehsan Ghaem Maghami 2549

27th North American Open

1.d4 ♟f6 2.♟f3 e6 3.g3 c5 4.♟g2 b5
5.e4 ♟b7 6.e5 ♟d5 7.0-0 ♟c6 8.a4
b4 9.c4 bxc3 10.♟xc3 ♟xc3 11.bxc3
♟e7 12.d5 exd5 13.♟xd5 ♟a5
14.♟d3 0-0 15.♟f4 ♟c6 16.♟fd1
♟c8 17.h4 h6 18.♟f5 ♟b3 19.♟ab1
♟xa4



20. ♖xh6 c4 21. ♖g4 g6 22. e6 1-0

COLUMBUS, OH

December 27-30, 2017

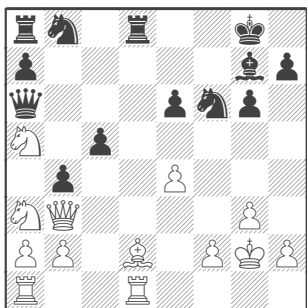
Pan-Am Intercollegiate (58 teams, 6 rounds)

1. WEBSTER A **5½** (Alex SHIMANOV 4½, Jorge CORI 4, Ray ROBSON 5, Vasif DURARBAYLI 4½),
 2-6. ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY **5**
 (Alexander IPATOV 4, Dariusz SWIERCZ 5, Yaroslav ZHEREBUKH 2, Francesco RAMBALDI 4, Cemil MARANDI 2½, Dorsa DERAKHSHANI 1), TEXAS TECH A 5 (Andrey BARYSHPOLETS 4, Sergei MATSENKO 5, Pavlo VORONTSOV 6, Evgen SHTSEMBULIAK 5½), TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY A, WEBSTER B, UNIVERSITY TEXAS DALLAS B 5,
 7. TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY B **4½**
 8-15. UNIV TEXAS DALLAS A, UNIV TEXAS DALLAS C, UNIV OF MICHIGAN A, HARVARD CRIMSON, UNIV OF CHICAGO A, ARIZONA STATE UNIV A, UNIV OF CHICAGO B, UNIV OF ILLINOIS A **4**, etc.

Alexander Ipatov 2659
Andrey Baryshpolets 2592

Pan-Am Intercollegiate

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. ♖f3 ♖f6 4. g3 dxc4 5. ♗g2 g6 6. ♗e5 ♗e6 7. ♗a3 ♗g7 8. ♗exc4 0-0 9. 0-0 ♖c8 10. ♖c2 ♗h3 11. ♗d1 ♗xg2 12. ♗xg2 ♗d8 13. e4 b5 14. ♗a5 c5 15. d5 ♗a6 16. ♗d2 e6 17. dxe6 fxe6 18. ♖b3 b4



19. ♗xb4 ♗xd1 20. ♗xd1 cxb4 21. ♗d8+ ♗f7 22. ♗3c4 ♗e7 23. ♗d6 ♖c8 24. ♖xb4 ♗f7 25. ♗e5+ ♗g8 26. ♖b3 h6 27. ♗xe6 ♗h7 28. ♗e7 ♖f8 29. ♖e6 ♗a6 30. ♗f7 ♗e8 31. ♖xa6 1-0

▼ Alexander Ipatov,
 Photo by Josip Asik.



FALLS CHURCH, VA

December 27-30, 2017

44th Eastern Open (7 rounds)

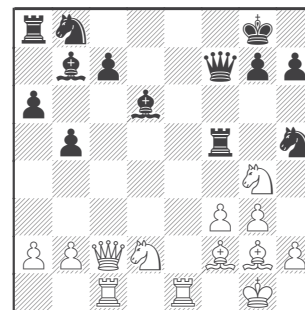
1. Alexander SHABALOV **7**,
 2. Aleksandr LENDERMAN **5½**,
 3-5. Gabriel PETESCH, Justin PAUL, Jeevan KARAMSETTY **5**,
 6-10. Sahil SINHA, Andy HUANG, Andy APPLEBAUM, Missaka WARUSAWITHARANA, Derek CLASBY **4½**, etc.

Alexander Shabalov 2544
Aleksandr Lenderman 2611

44th Eastern Open

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. ♗f3 a6 4. ♗bd2 ♗f6 5. g3 dxc4 6. ♗xc4 b5 7. ♗ce5

♗b7 8. ♗g2 ♖c8 9. 0-0 ♗e7 10. ♗f4 0-0 11. ♗c1 ♗a7 12. ♗h3 ♗d5 13. ♗d2 ♖d8 14. ♖c2 ♗h5 15. ♗e3 f5 16. f3 ♗d6 17. ♗f2 ♖g5 18. ♗g2 ♖h6 19. e4 ♗b7 20. exf5 ♗xf5 21. ♗g4 ♖g6 22. d5 ♗a8 23. dxe6 ♖xe6 24. ♗fe1 ♖f7



25. ♗h3 ♗xf3 26. ♗xf3 ♖xf3 27. ♖b3+ ♖xb3 28. axb3 ♗d7 29. ♗h6+ gxh6 30. ♗xd7 ♗f6 31. ♗e6+ ♗g7 32. ♗c5 ♗g6 33. ♗xd6 cxd6 34. ♗c7 ♗e4 35. ♗xe4 ♗xe4 36. ♗d5 ♗e8 37. ♗f7+ 1-0

NEW YORK, NY

December 28-30, 2017

36th Empire City Open (6 rounds)

1-2. Sergei AZAROV, Alex FISHBEIN **5**,
 3-7. Alexander IVANOV, Sergey KUDRIN, Michael ROHDE, Brandon JACOBSON, Akira NAKADA **4½**,
 8-14. Alexander STRIPUNSKY, David BRODSKY, Levy ROZMAN, Daniel JERE, Wesley WANG, William GRAIF, Oliver CHERNIN **4**, etc.

CHAMBLEE, GA

December 28-30, 2017

Atlanta Open (5 rounds)

1-2. Jorge OQUENDO, Matthew PUCKETT **4**,
 3-4. Alonso ZAPATA, Yuri BARNAKOV **3½**,
 5-7. Vedic PANDA, Weston SHARPE, Samarth BELLAYARU **3**,
 8-10. Jeremy MANDELKERN, Anand SRINIVASAN, Drew JUSTICE **2½**, etc.

CHERRY HILL, NJ

December 30-31, 2017

South Jersey Open (5 rounds)

1. Thomas BARTELL **4½**,
 2-3. Dov GORMAN, Shelly MAYS **4**,



4-5. Eddy TIAN, Joseph MUCERINO Jr **3½**,
6-8. Peter MINEAR, Michael KATZ,
Abhimanyu MISHRA **3**,
9-17. Sergey ERENBURG, Bryan
SMITH, Noah THOMFORDE-TOATES,
Boyang ZHAO, Eric WU, Vrithik
UMAPATHY, Eshan GUHA, Suraj
ORUGANTI, Neil SAMANT **2½**, etc.

BOSTON, MA

January 5-7, 2018

6th Boston Chess Congress (5 rounds)

1-5. Alexander IVANOV, Yaroslav
ZHEREBUKH, Mika BRATTAIN,
Edward SONG, Alejandro BOTTA **4**,
6-12. Steven ZIERK, Denys SHMELOV,
Nathan SOLON, Carissa YIP,
Rajesh SHANMUGASUNDARAM,
Nithin KAVI, Jason DRAKE **3½**, etc.

ESTERO, FL

January 5-7, 2018

4th Gulf Coast New Year's Open (5 rounds)

1-4. Yuniesky QUESADA,
Julio BECERRA, Yunier RIVERA,
Pavel BLATNY **4**,
5-7. Jindrich ZAPLETAL,
Vlad YANOVSKY, Theodore SLADE **3½**,
8-10. Cesar VALIDO, Carlos ANDRETTA,
Ravindra WIJESUNDERA **3**, etc.

SANTA CLARA, CA

January 5-7, 2018

New Year Championship (6 rounds)

1. Rayan TAGHIZADEH **5½**,
2-4. Sijing WU, Milind MAITI,
Archit DASIKHA **4½**,
5-6. Rochelle WU,
Pranav SENTHILKUMAR **4**,
7-12. Sergei CHOBANYAN,
Paulo SANTANNA, Henry WANG,
Vyom VIDYARTHI, Krishna NATHAN,
Trina CHATTERJEE **3½**, etc.

PIGEON FORGE, TN

January 5-7, 2018

3rd Annual Smoky MT 2018 (5 rounds)

1. Ronald BURNETT **4½**,
2-3. Roman KOZELOV, Todd ANDREWS **4**,
4-5. Forest CHEN, Alexander RUTTEN **3½**,
6-9. David JUSTICE, Kaleb GOSDIN,

Joshua CAMPBELL, Dhruv CHANDRA **3**,
10-16. Neal HARRIS, Michael KLIBER,
Haskell GLOVER, Brad PHILLIS,
Christopher FERRANTE, Suhas
GUMMADI, Adrian MAJERLE **2½**, etc.

NEW YORK, NY

January 5-7, 2018

Marshall Chess Club Weekend (5 rounds)

1-2. Brandon JACOBSON,
Samuel BELLOWES **4**,
3-5. Akira NAKADA, William YEN,
Matthew BOXER **3½**,
6-8. Joshua COLAS, William HU,
Daniel WIEBE **3**,
9-18. George BERG, Derek CHEN,
Adi MURGESCU, Edward KOPIECKI,
Liam PUTNAM, Szymon RUDOWSKI,
Ashutosh GAJBINKAR,
Wesley HELLNER, Andrew ZHENG,
John WALTON **2½**, etc.

SCHAUMBURG, IL

January 6-7, 2018

Tim Just Winter Open XXXV (5 rounds)

1. Zhaozhi LI **5**,
2-6. Angel ANGELOV,
Akhil KALGHATGI, Todd FREITAG,
Jack CURCIO, Daniel BRONFEYN **4**,
7-16. Matthew STEVENS,
Kenneth WALLACH, Nicholas
BARTOCHOWSKI, Nikhil KALGHATGI,
Nathan HOLZMUELLER, Dimitar MARDOV,
Allen BECKER, Eric STARKMAN,
Shreyas REDDY, Steven NAPOLI **3½**, etc.

CHARLOTTE, NC

January 11-15, 2018

Winter 2018 CCCSA GM/IM (9 rounds)

GM A

1. John BARTHOLOMEW **6**,
2. Kevin WANG **5½**,
3-5. Praggnanandhaa RAMESHBABU,
Alder ESCOBAR, Denys SHMELOV **5**,
6. Chandran PANCHANATHAN **4½**,
7. Alexander KALIKSHTEYN **4**,
8-9. Angel ARRIBAS, Kassa KORLEY **3½**,
10. David BRODSKY **3**

GM B

1-2. John BURKE, Denis KADRIC **6½**,
3-4. Djurabek KHAMRAKULOV,
Andrey GOROVETS **5**,

5-8. Steven ZIERK,
Aleksandr OSTROVSKIY,
Bryce TIGLON, Gauri SHANKAR **4**,
9. Alonso ZAPATA **3½**,
10. Brandon JACOBSON **2½**

John Burke

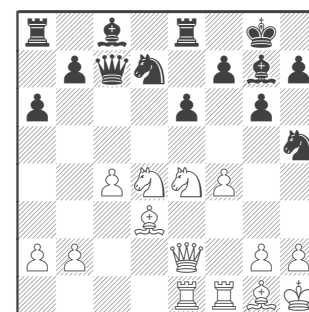
2514

Alonso Zapata

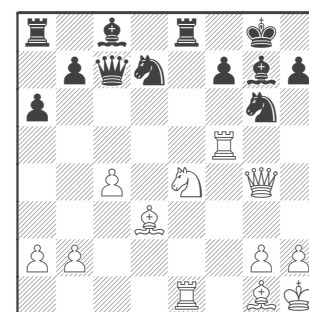
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CCCSA Winter B

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4
a6 5.♙d3 ♘f6 6.0-0 ♖c7 7.♙e2 d6
8.f4 ♘bd7 9.c4 ♙e7 10.♘c3 0-0
11.♙e3 ♙e8 12.♙ae1 ♙f8 13.♙h1
g6 14.♙g1 ♙g7 15.e5 ♘h5 16.exd6
♙xd6 17.♘e4 ♙c7



18.f5 exf5 19.♘xf5 gxf5 20.♙xf5 ♘f4
21.♙g4 ♘g6



22.♙xf7 ♘de5 23.♙xg6 hxg6 24.♙xc7
♙d7 25.♙c2 ♙c6 26.♘d6 ♙ed8 27.c5
1-0

IM C

1-2. Titas STREMAVICIUS, Jennifer YU **6½**,
3. Wesley WANG **6**,
4. Aaron JACOBSON **5½**,
5. Tianqi WANG **5**,
6-7. Andrew ZHANG HONG,
Benjamin MOON **4½**,
8. Angelo YOUNG **3½**,
9. Gary NG **2**,
10. Alejandro MONTALVO **1**.

PHILADELPHIA, PA

January 12-15, 2018

50th Liberty Bell Open (7 rounds)

1. Alexander SHABALOV 6,
 2. Sergey ERENBURG 5½,
 3-7. Thomas BARTELL,
 Mika BRATTAIN, Alexander KATZ,
 Jay BONIN, Yoon-Young KIM 5,
 8-12. Aleksandr LENDERMAN,
 Justin SARKAR, William GRAIF,
 Carl HAESSLER, Nico CHASIN 4½, etc.

ROCKVILLE, MD

January 12-15, 2018

10th Chesapeake Open (7 rounds)

1. Julio SADORRA 6½,
 2-3. Alex FISHBEIN,
 Praveen BALAKRISHNAN 5½,
 4-8. Christopher SHEN, Haik MANUELIAN,
 Jeevan KARAMSETTY, Ralph ZIMMER,
 Andrew SAMUELSON 4½,
 9-11. Akshita GORTI, Justin PAUL,
 Akshay INDUSEKAR 4, etc.

DOO

Julio Sadorra 2539
 Alex Fishbein 2444

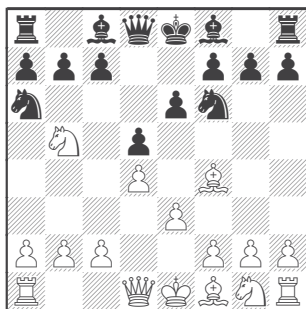
10th Chesapeake Open

Annotations by GM Julio Sadorra

1.d4 ♖f6 2.♗c3 d5 If 2...g6 then
 3.♗f4!? is still interesting and after
 3...d5 4.♗f3 ♗g7 5.♖d2!? we transpose
 into the Tarzan Attack which was
 popularized by the creative and erudite
 GM Arthur Kogan.

3.♗f4 Recently I've been inspired by
 original players like Jobava and Rapport.

3...e6 4.♗b5 ♗a6 5.e3

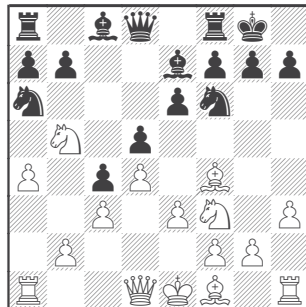


5...♗e7!? My opponent played this
 after some thought, which told me that
 he was not familiar with the position and

that he was trying to take me out of my
 preparation, as it's not the most natural
 move. 5...c6 is more natural, then 6.♗c3
 when many games have been played
 from this position since 2016.

6.h3 Prophylaxis against ...♗h5.

6...0-0 7.♗f3 c5 8.c3 c4 9.a4



9...♗e4 A game played in Russia,
 a week after the Chesapeake Open,
 went: 9...♗d7 10.b3 cxb3 11.♗d3 ♗e4
 12.♖xb3 ♖c8 13.♗xe4 dxe4 14.♗d2
 ♖a5 15.0-0 ♗b8 16.♗xe4 ♗c6 17.♗ed6
 ♗xd6 18.♗xd6 ♖c7 19.c4 ♗d7 20.e4 b6
 21.♖fd1 ♗a8 22.d5 ♖c5 23.♖g3 ♗h8

▼ Julio Sadorra.
 Photo by Paul Truong.



24.♗e5 f6 25.dxe6 ♖e7 26.♗f7+ 1-0
 A.Trjapishko 2478 - A.Gabrielian 2526,
 Taganrog 2017.

10.♖c2! An important move that slows
 down Black's momentum and gives him
 some problems.

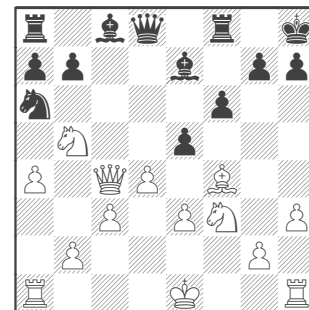
10...f6? 10...f5 11.♗e5±; 10...♗d6
 11.b3± (11.♗e2).

11.♗xc4 ♗xf2 12.♖xf2 dxc4

13.♖e2! This is probably what my
 opponent underestimated.

13...e5 13...♖d5 14.e4 ♖c6 15.0-0±.

14.♖xc4+ ♗h8



15.♗h2! 15.dxe5 only gives Black
 unnecessary counterplay, even though
 White should objectively still be better,
 e.g. 15...♗c5 16.♗bd4 fxe5 17.♗xe5
 ♖e8 or 17...♗h4+ 18.g3.

15...♖b6 16.0-0 ♗e6 17.♖e2 ♖c6
 18.♗d2 exd4 19.exd4 White is
 materially and positionally superior as
 Black's knight and dark-squared bishop
 are dead.

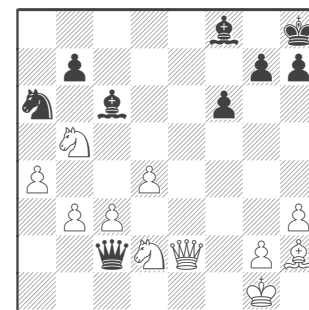
19...♖fe1 20.♖fe1 ♗f8 21.♖f2

Planning to double rooks on the e-file.

21...♗d5 22.♖xe8 ♖xe8 An attempt to
 gain counterplay in a difficult position,
 otherwise I simply improve my pieces
 and start rolling down my c- and d-
 pawns.

23.♗xa7 ♖d7 23...♖e6 24.♗g3 ♖e2
 25.♖e1 is winning for White.

24.♗b5 ♗c6 25.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 26.♖xe1
 ♖d5 27.♖e2 ♖a2 28.b3 ♖c2



29.♔g3! Improving my king safety, after which there are many ways to keep improving my position on the path to victory.

29...h6 30.♖h2 ♔d7 31.♗e3 ♗g6 32.♗e4 f5 33.♗e3 ♔c6 34.♘a7 ♔d5 35.♗e5 ♔g8 36.♘c8 Or immediately 36.b4+-. 36...♔e6 37.♘a7 ♗f7 38.b4 b6 39.b5 ♔a2 40.bxa6 ♗xa7 41.♗e8

1-0

This was an important win for me after such a slow start as it allowed me to take the lead and gain the confidence to keep my momentum going until the end of the event!

CONCORD, CA

January 12-15, 2018
9th Golden State Open (7 rounds)

1. Kamil DRAGUN 6,
2-5. Daniel NARODITSKY, Ruifeng LI,
Conrad HOLT, Siddharth BANIK 5½,
6-9. Andrey STUKOPIN, Jack ZHU,
Kazim GULAMALI, Ladia JIRASEK 5,
10-13. Vincent MCCAMBRIDGE,
Josiah STEARMAN, Teemu VIRTANEN,
Alex KOLAY 4½, etc.

PORTSMOUTH, NH

January 13-14, 2018
Portsmouth Open (4 rounds)

1. Alexander IVANOV 4,
2-3. David VIGORITO, David CARTER 3½,
4-5. Jerry LI, Frank PRESTIA 3,
6-12. Nithin KAVI, Suraj RAMANATHAN,
Timothy SAGE, Paris PRESTIA, Alan
SCHALK, Erin DAME,
Nowell SHEINWALD 2½, etc.

LANSING, MI

January 13-14, 2018
2018 Michigan Master Expert Class
Championship (5 rounds)

1. Mark HEIMANN 4½,
2-4. Seth HOMA, Joshua POSTHUMA,
Surya PARASURAMAN 3½,
5-9. Kevin NOREN, Manis DAVIDOVICH,
Ariel LEVI, Tony PALMER,
Hersh SINGH 3,
10-12. Lester VAN METER, Anthony

NICHOLS, Kyle WEBSTER 2½, etc.

SAN DIEGO, CA

January 13-15, 2018
Dreaming King (6 rounds)

1. Dionisio ALDAMA 5½,
2-4. Joshua SHENG, Keaton KIEWRA,
Xiaopeng ZHANG 4½,
5-10. John BRYANT, Alexandre
KRETCHETOV, Gabriel SAM,
Brulio CUARTA, Gordon MCNEILL Jr,
Ajay KRISHNAN 4, etc.

RICHARDSON, TX

January 13-15, 2018
DCC FIDE Open I (7 rounds)

1-3. Kacper DROZDOWSKI,
Zurab JAVAKHADZE, Justin WANG 6,
4. Rudransh RAJARAM 4½,
5-6. Atreya VAIDYA, Kevin LIU 4,
7-12. Jack EASTON,
Rithik POLAVARAM, Alfonso VIRGEN,
Camille KAO, Yue CHU,
Nitin CHIKKODI 3½, etc.

ASHEVILLE, NC

January 26-28, 2018
Land Of The Sky XXXI (5 rounds)

1. Elshan MORADIABADI 4½,
2-3. Alex YERMOLINSKY,
Alexander IVANOV 3½,
4-6. Sanjay GHATTI, Mark BIERNACKI,
Neo ZHU 3,
7-11. Daniel CREMISI,
Peter BERELOS, Kapish POTULA,
Vishnu VANAPALLI, Neil DESHPANDE 2½,
etc.

COLUMBUS, OH

January 26-28, 2018
2018 Cardinal Open (5 rounds)

1-2. Alexander SHABALOV,
Walker GRIGGS 4½,
3-4. Vladimir BELOUS 4,
5. Scott RAMER 3½,
6-15. Grant XU, Maggie FENG,
Justin PAUL, Vincent BAKER,
Jason WANG, Nabil FELIACHI,
Lester VAN METER, Aristo LIU,
Elton CAO, James MCLAUGHLIN 3, etc.

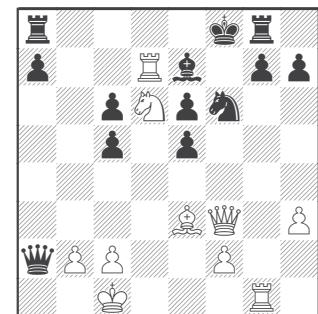


▲ Alexander Shabalov,
Photo by Lennart Ootes.

Walker Griggs 2280
Grant Xu 2171

Cardinal Open

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e5 4.♘f3
♘bd7 5.g4 ♘xg4 6.♗g1 exd4 7.♘xd4
♘de5 8.h3 ♘f6 9.♔e3 c5 10.♘f3 ♔e6
11.♘g5 ♗a5 12.♘xe6 fxe6 13.♔b5+
♘c6 14.♗f3 ♖f7 15.♔xc6 bxc6
16.0-0-0 ♔e7 17.e5 dxe5 18.♗d7
♗hg8 19.♘e4 ♗xa2 20.♘d6+ ♖f8



21.♗xf6+ gxf6 22.♔h6+ ♗g7 23.♔xg7+

♠g8 24. ♠xf6+ ♠f8 25. ♠xe7 #. 1-0

SANTA CLARA, CA

January 26-28, 2018
CM Azhar Memorial (5 rounds)

1. Conrad HOLT 5,
2. Sijing WU 4,
- 3-5. Rochelle WU, Theodore BIYASAS, David PAN 3½,
- 6-13. Josiah TEARMAN, Kireet PANUGANTI, Philipp PEREPELTSKY, Milind MAITI, Adrian KONDAKOV, Eliam CHANG, Sriram KRISHNAKUMAR, Aaron GREEN 3, etc.

ORLANDO, FL

January 26-28, 2018
Central Florida Chess Club
Championship
(5 rounds)

- 1-2. John LUDWIG, Corey ACOR 4,
- 3-4. Nickolas MOORE, Juan PEREIRA 3½,
- 5-7. Blake BAUMGARTNER, Raghav VENKAT, Steven LENHART 3,
- 8-10. Theodore SLADE, Erick ZHAO, Satvik REDDY 2½, etc.

CHICAGO, IL

January 27-28, 2018
Jane Adams Memorial (4 rounds)

1. Awonder LIANG 4,
- 2-7. Vladimir GEORGIEV, Fidel CORRALES, Priyadarshan KANNAPPAN, Ashwin JAYARAM, Gauri SHANKAR, Tom POLGAR-SHUTZMAN 3,
- 8-13. Igor TSYGANOV, Frederick RHINE, Robby HECHT, Daniel BRONFEYN, Matthew WILSON, Harrison LOH 2½, etc.

ROSEVILLE, MN

January 27-28, 2018
Minnesota Winter Open (5 rounds)

1. Andrew TANG 4½,,
- 2-6. Andrew TITUS, Okechukwu IWU, Ashton JIN, Allen STORBAKKEN, Ethan HUNT 4,
- 7-8. Wilson GIBBINS, Eddie WASSERMAN 3½,
- 9-15. Samrug NARAYANAN,

Nastassja MATUS, Dane ZAGAR, Linden LI, Robert NEWSHUTZ, Henry HUTTON, Saketh BUDIDETI 3, etc.

RICHARDSON, TX

February 3-4, 2018
DCC FIDE Open II (5 rounds)

1. Advait PATEL 4½,
2. Titas STREMAVICIUS 4,
3. Zurab JAVAKHADZE 3½,
- 4-8. Jack EASTON, Brian TINEO, Segev ELIEZER, Kai TSUEI, Ambica YELLAMRAJU 3,
- 9-11. Jorn DAMMANN, Grayson RORRER, Eric WANG 2½, etc.

SAINT LOUIS, MO

February 8-13, 2018
2018 Saint Louis Norm Congress (9 rounds)

GM

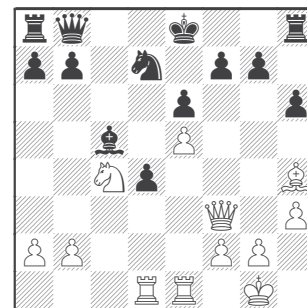
1. Pavlo VORONTSOV 6,
2. Stavroula TSOLAKIDOU 5½,
- 3-5. Mark PARAGUA, Advait PATEL, Djurabek KHAMRAKULOV 5,

6. John BARTHOLOMEW 5,
7. Tatev ABRAHAMYAN 4½,
8. Daniel GUREVICH 3½,
9. Akshat CHANDRA 3,
10. Denes BOROS 2½

Advait Patel 2478
Daniel Gurevich 2483

Saint Louis Norm GM

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♠f5 4.♠f3 e6
5.♠e2 ♠e7 6.0-0 c5 7.♠e3 ♠d7
8.c4 dxc4 9.♠a3 ♠d5 10.♠g5 ♠b8
11.♠xc4 h6 12.♠h4 ♠5b6 13.♠e1
♠g4 14.h3 ♠xf3 15.♠xf3 ♠xc4
16.♠xc4 cxd4 17.♠ad1 ♠c5



SOLUTIONS

Page 142

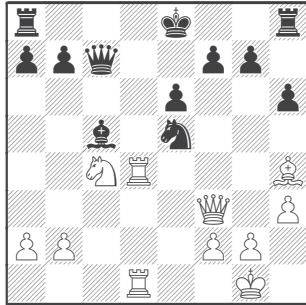
1. Black prefers "B" (black king on h7 instead of f7). If the black king retreats (either "A" or "B"), White will win easily after 2.♠g6 and 3.f6. The only way to escape is via the temporary pawn sacrifice – 1...g6+! 2.fxg6+ ♠g7, and Black secures a draw. However, in position "A", White has an opportunity to play 2.♠h6! gxf5 3.♠h7!, securing the promotion of the pawn. **3 points.**

2. Black prefers "A" (black pawn on b6 instead of b5). White's queen and two rooks are active and, seemingly, enough compensation for a slight material disadvantage. However, White's weak king's position could be fatal against the minor pieces. Especially the f3 square. Diagram "A" is from C.Panchanathan 2556 - D.Kononenko 2593, Pardubice 2011. The game ended quickly – 28...♠d4! 29.♠xd4! hoping for 29...

cxtd4? 30.♠e7 ♠f6 31.♠xf6 and 32. ♠xb7=. But, after 29...h6! White resigned. Moving the queen allows 30...cxd4, for example 30.♠h4 cxd4 31.♠e7 ♠d5+-. In position "B", the black c5 pawn is not protected, and Black cannot play 29...h6 due to 30.♠xc5+-. **6 points.**

3. Black prefers "B". (White king on d1 instead of c1). Black needs the White king on d1 to avoid the following spectacular disaster – 1.♠e6!! – A discovered attack (♠xf6) and interference (♠h3+) at the same time. After 1...♠xe5 (what else?), White can put away the game – 2.♠h3+ ♠h5 3.g5 mate. Of course, this is if the king is on c1 ("A"). With the king on d1 ("B"), the g4-pawn is pinned and there is no checkmate, thus White cannot leave the queen unprotected on move 1. **8 points.**

18. ♖xd4 ♔c7 19. ♖ed1 ♜xe5



20. ♖xb7

1-0

IM

1. Sergei MATSENKO 7,
- 2-5. Joel BANAWA,
- Josiah STEARMAN, Joshua COLAS,
- Tansel TURGUT 5,
6. Justin WANG 4½,
- 7-8. Aaron GRABINSKY, Luis TORRES 4,
9. Brandon JACOBSON 3½,
10. Qiyu ZHOU 2

LINTHICUM HEIGHTS, MD

February 9-11, 2018
56th Baltimore Open (5 rounds)

1. Sergey ERENBURG 4½,

2-3. Kevin CARL, Eugene HUA 4,
4-7. Tanguy RINGOIR,
Haik MANUELIAN, Maximillian LU,
Justin PAUL 3½,
8-12. Rohan AHUJA, Akshita GORTI,
Andy HUANG, Jason MOREFIELD,
Dominique MYERS 3, etc.

FORT WORTH, TX

February 15-19, 2018
9th Southwest Class Championship
(9 rounds)

- 1-2. Anton KOVALYOV,
- Andrey BARYSHPOLETS 7,
- 3-4. Nicolas CHECA, Dani RAZNIKOV 6½,
- 5-10. Andrey STUKOPIN,
- Kamil DRAGUN, Evgeny SHTEMBULIAK,
- Andrey GOROVETS,
- Holden HERNANDEZ,
- Kacper DROZDOWSKI 6, etc.

SAN DIEGO, CA

February 17-19, 2018
San Diego Open (6 rounds)

- 1-4. Eugene PERELSHTEYN,
- John BRYANT, Melikset KHACHIAN,
- Keaton KIEWRA 4½,
- 5-7. Robert AGHASARYAN,

Annie WANG, Anshul ADVE 4,
8-10. Jianwen WONG, Kevin DAVIDSON,
Alexander COSTELLO 3½, etc.

FALLS CHURCH, VA

February 23-25, 2018
George Washington Open (5 rounds)

1. Alexander SHABALOV 4½,
- 2-3. Sergey ERENBURG,
- Elshan MORADIABADI 4,
- 4-10. Timur GAREYEV,
- David BRODSKY, Lev PACIORKOWSKI,
- Jennifer YU, Gabriel PETESCH,
- Sabina FOISOR, Alex WANG 3½, etc.

MINEAPOLIS, MN

February 23-25, 2018
2018 MN Open (6 rounds)

1. Sean NAGLE 6,
- 2-3. Andrew TANG, Kevin WASILUK 4½,
- 4-7. Okechukwu IWU,
- Nathan HOOVER, Joseph LONGEN,
- Ashton JIN 4,
- 8-14. Andrew TITUS,
- Scott RIESTER, Wilson GIBBINS,
- Samrug NARAYANAN, Nels
- TRUELSON, Timothy RADERMACHER,
- Ahmet SHAPIRO-ERCIYAS 3½, etc.

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TOURNAMENTS from ABROAD

LONDON, ENGLAND

December 2-9, 2017
London Classic Open (9 rounds)

1-3. Gabriel SARGISSIAN,
Hrant MELKUMYAN, Sebastien MAZE 7½,
4-9. Alexander MOTYLEV, Tamir
NABATY, Nils GRANDELIUS, Matthieu
CORNETTE, Alexander DONCHENKO,
Vasilios KOTRONIAS 7, etc.

ROME, ITALY

December 3-10, 2017
Rome City Open 2017 (9 rounds)

1. Emre CAN 7½,
2-5. Sebastian BOGNER,
Yuri SOLODOVNICHENKO, Awonder
LIANG, Frank BRACKER 6½,
6-9. Dmitrij KOLLARS, Andrei
ISTRATESCU, Jonathan CARLSTEDT,
Gojko LAKETIC 6, etc.

ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

December 2-15, 2017
70th Russian Championship

1-2. Peter SVIDLER, Nikita VITIUGOV 7,
3-4. Daniil DUBOV, Vladimir FEDOSEEV 6½,
5-7. Vladimir MALAKHOV,
Evgeny TOMASHEVSKY,
Alexander RIAZANTSEV 6,
8-9. Sanan SJUGIROV, Ernesto
INARKIEV 5, 10. Maxim MATLAKOV 4½,
11. Evgeny ROMANOV 3½,
12. Sergey VOLKOV 3.

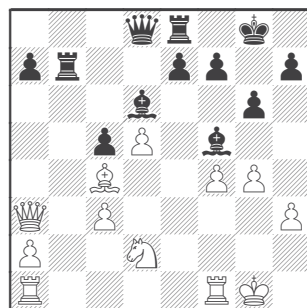
Tie-break:

Peter SVIDLER - Nikita VITIUGOV 2-0

Sergey Volkov 2645
Peter Svidler 2765

70th Russian Championship

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.♘f3
♙g7 5.♗b3 dxc4 6.♗xc4 ♙e6
7.♗a4+ ♙d7 8.♗b3 c5 9.d5 b5 10.e4
b4 11.e5 bxc3 12.exf6 ♙xf6 13.bxc3
0-0 14.♙h6 ♙e8 15.♙c4 ♙g4
16.♘d2 ♘d7 17.h3 ♙b8 18.♗a3 ♙f5
19.0-0 ♘e5 20.♙f4 ♙b7 21.♙xe5
♙xe5 22.f4 ♙d6 23.g4



23...e6 24.gxf5 exd5 25.♙a6 c4
26.♗a4 ♙b2 27.♘f3 ♙e2 28.♗c6
♙e7 29.♗a8+ ♙b8 30.♗xd5 ♙xf4
31.♙fe1 ♙e3+ 32.♙h1 ♙h2+ 0-1

SITGES, SPAIN

December 15-23, 2017
Sunway Sitges Open (9 rounds)

1. Chithambaram ARAVINDH 7½,
2-5. Sam SHANKLAND, Matthias DANN,
Salem SALEH, Gascon DEL NOGAL 7,
6-12. Hrant MELKUMYAN, Zdenko
KOZUL, Alexander MOTYLEV, Jaime
LATASA, Ivan SOKOLOV, Alexander
ZUBOV, Lukas CERNOUSEK 6½, etc.

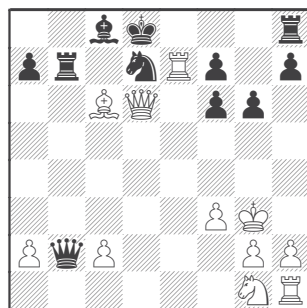
Tie-break:

Sam SHANKLAND - Salem SALEH 1½-½

Sam Shankland 2662
Lars Ootes 2384

Sunway Sitges Open

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♙g5
c6 5.♗d2 b5 6.f3 ♘bd7 7.d5 cxd5
8.♙xb5 dxe4 9.♙xf6 exf6 10.♘xe4
♙e7 11.♙c6 ♙b8 12.♘xd6+ ♙xd6
13.♗xd6 ♗a5+ 14.♙f2 ♗b6+ 15.♙g3
♗xb2 16.♙e1+ ♙d8 17.♙e7 ♙b7



18.♙xb7 ♗xb7 19.♙xd7+ ♗xd7
20.♗xf6+ ♙c7 21.♗xh8 ♙d6+ 22.f4
1-0

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA

December 25-30, 2017
World Rapid and Blitz Championships

World Rapid (15 rounds)

1-3. Viswanathan ANAND,
Vladimir FEDOSEEV,
Ian NEPOMNIACHTCHI 10½,
4-9. Bu XIANGZHI, Magnus CARLSEN,
Alexander GRISCHUK,
Boris SAVCHENKO, Rauf MAMEDOV,
Gadir GUSEINOV 10,
10-18. Peter SVIDLER, Wang HAO,
Yu YANGYI, Vladimir ONISCHUK,
Vladislav ARTEMIEV, Ding LIREN,
P. HARIKRISHNA, Sergey
GRIGORIANTS, Zhao JUN 9½, etc.

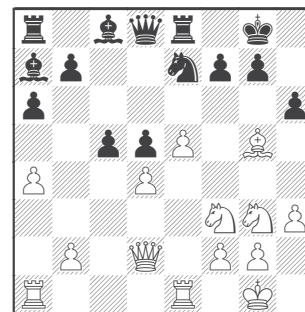
Tie-break:

Viswanathan ANAND -
Vladimir FEDOSEEV 1½ -½

Viswanathan Anand 2782
Peter Leko 2691

World Rapid

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.0-0
♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.h3 d6 7.c3 a6 8.a4
♙a7 9.♘bd2 ♘e7 10.♙e1 c6 11.♙b3
♘g6 12.♙c2 ♙e8 13.d4 ♘h5 14.♘f1
♘hf4 15.♘g3 exd4 16.cxd4 d5
17.e5 c5 18.♙xg6 ♘xg6 19.♙g5 ♘e7
20.♗d2 h6



21.♙f6 ♙h7 22.♘g5+ ♙g8 23.♘h5
gxf6 24.♘xf7 ♙xf7 25.♗xh6 ♘f5



26. ♖h7+ ♕f8 27. exf6 ♙e6 28. ♖f4
 ♜xf6 29. ♖g6+ ♜xg6 30. ♜xg6+-
 ♖g7 31. ♙e3 ♙e7 32. ♙ae1 ♙ae8
 33. ♙g3 ♙f7 34. h4 ♙b8 35. ♙ge3 ♙fe7
 36. dxc5 ♙f7 37. ♜f6 ♙xe3 38. ♙xe3
 ♙xe3 39. fxe3 ♙c7 40. g4 ♖e8
 41. ♜h8+ ♙g8 42. h5 ♙d8 43. ♜h6+
 ♖g7 44. ♜d6+ ♙e7 45. ♜b8+ ♖e8
 46. b4 a5 47. ♜xb7 axb4 48. ♜xb4
 ♖f6 49. ♜f4 ♖e8 50. c6 ♙e6 51. h6

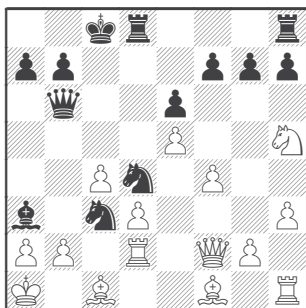
1-0



Andrey Esipenko.
 Photo by Lennart Ootes.

Sergey Karjakin 2760
Andrey Esipenko 2564
 World Rapid

1. e4 c6 2. ♖f3 d5 3. ♖c3 ♙g4 4. h3 ♙xf3
 5. ♜xf3 ♖f6 6. d3 e6 7. ♙d2 ♜b6
 8. 0-0-0 d4 9. ♖e2 c5 10. e5 ♖d5 11. ♖f4
 ♖b4 12. ♖b1 ♖d7 13. ♜e4 ♖c6
 14. ♖h5 0-0-0 15. f4 c4 16. dxc4 ♙a3
 17. ♙c1 ♖c5 18. ♜f3 d3 19. cxd3 ♖a4
 20. ♙d2 ♖d4 21. ♜f2 ♖c3+ 22. ♖a1



22... ♜b3 23. bxc3 ♜xc3+ 24. ♙b2
 ♙xb2+ 25. ♙xb2 ♜c1+ 26. ♙b1 ♖c2+
 27. ♜xc2 ♜xc2 28. g3 b5 29. cxb5 ♙d4

0-1

World Blitz (21 rounds)

1. Magnus CARLSEN 16,
 2-3. Sergey KARJAKIN,
 Viswanathan ANAND 14½,
 4-5. Wang HAO, Levon ARONIAN 14,
 6-11. Ding LIREN, Tigran L.
 PETROSIAN, Yu YANGYI, Anton
 KOROBOV, Shakhriyar MAMEDYAROV,
 Peter SVIDLER 13½, etc.

CHENNAI, INDIA

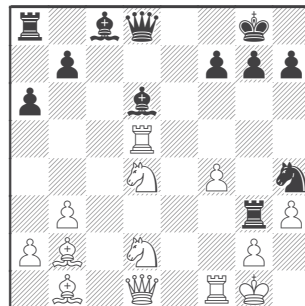
January 18-25, 2018

10th Chennai Open 2018 (10 rounds)

1-5. R.R. LAXMAN, Ivan ROZUM,
 Timur GAREYEV, Marat DZHUMAEV,
 Arjun ERIGAISI 8,
 6-12. Chakkravarthy DEEPAN, Roeland
 PRUIJSSERS, Mohapatra SIDHANT,
 K. RATHNAKARAN,
 Raghunandan SRIHARI, Suat ATALIK,
 Nguyen HOA 7½, etc.

Chandran Deepan 2475
R.R. Laxman 2434
 10th Chennai Open

1. ♖f3 ♖f6 2. c4 e6 3. b3 a6 4. e3 d5
 5. ♙b2 c5 6. ♙e2 ♖c6 7. cxd5 exd5
 8. d4 cxd4 9. ♖xd4 ♙b4+ 10. ♙c3
 ♙d6 11. ♖d2 ♖e5 12. h3 0-0 13. ♙b2
 ♙e8 14. 0-0 ♖g6 15. ♙d3 ♖h4
 16. ♙c1 ♖e4 17. f4 ♖c5 18. ♙b1 ♙xe3
 19. ♙xc5 ♙g3 20. ♙xd5



20... ♖xg2 21. ♙f3 ♖e3+ 22. ♙xg3
 ♖xd1 23. ♙xg7+ ♖f8 24. ♙dg5 ♜c7
 25. f5 ♖xb2 26. ♖e4 ♜c1+ 27. ♖g2
 ♜xb1 28. ♖xd6 ♖e7 29. ♖xf7 ♙e4+
 30. ♖f3 ♜c2+ 31. ♖g3 b5 32. ♖7e5+
 ♖d6 33. ♙f7 ♖d1 34. ♖g4 ♜xa2
 35. ♙xh7 ♜xb3 36. ♙g6+ ♖c5

37. ♙c7+ ♖b4 38. ♙d6 ♙xf5 39. ♙c1
 ♙xg4 40. hxg4 ♙f8

0-1

BAERUM, NORWAY

February 9-13, 2018

Fischer-Random Rapid 2018

Magnus CARLSEN -
 Hikaru NAKAMURA 9-7

HARBIN, CHINA

February 4-7, 2018

Hou vs Karpov Rapid Match

Anatoly KARPOV - Hou YIFAN 3½-2½

LISBON, PORTUGAL

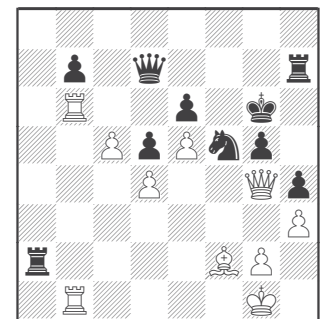
February 3-9, 2018

Portugal Open (9 rounds)

1-3. Aleksandar INDJIC, Anton
 DEMCHENKO, Nikita PETROV 7½,
 4-12. Baadur JOBAVA, Andreas
 DIERMAIR, Gabor NAGY, Christopher
 Repka, M.R. VENKATESH, Oleg
 KORNEEV, Jaime LATASA, Samuel
 SEVIAN, Rui DAMASO 7, etc.

Baadur Jobava 2685
Marco Ferrante 2267

Portugal Open



42. ♙e3 ♖xe3 43. ♙xe6+ ♖g7 44. c6
 ♙xg2+ 45. ♙xg2 ♙xe6 46. ♙xg5+
 ♙g6 47. ♙xb7+

1-0





WHERE GRANDMASTERS ADVISE YOUNG PLAYERS

5x5 Q&A

01 What is the advantage of someone starting to play chess at an early age? When is it best to start? And for those who might be late in learning the game, are they able to get back on track to becoming a titled player?

Chess is like another language: those who learn it at an early age will speak it better than other people. Starting as a child is a great advantage if you finally dedicate yourself professionally, although you can recover lost time and reach a level of IM or GM, since these titles are nowadays easy to achieve.

02 If there are three main departments of the game — opening, middlegame and endgame — what portion of our time should we spend on each? And what is the most important?

The distribution of time should be based on three factors: the level of each player, the time spent on chess, and personal goals. The lower the level and the time spent, the greater the percentage on tactics and endgames. The higher the level and higher the

Eight Times Spanish Champion, Kramnik's Second in WCC Match vs. Kasparov

GM MIGUEL ILLESCAS



objectives, then more important is strategy and openings.

03 From your own experience can you recall any specific type of opening position or endgame theme that an aspiring chess player should be sure to study

because of its particular importance?

Rook endgames, classical openings (Italian Game, Orthodox Queen's Gambit), open positions with lots of piece play.

04 Not everyone can be a chess world champion. But how can chess be of benefit in life and business?

Chess teaches you how to plan and make decisions. It also accustoms you to putting yourself in the place of others, to think what the other party wants, to negotiate and reach compromises with others and with yourself. On the other hand, you learn to face difficulties and to overcome defeats.

05 Why would you recommend chess to youngsters? What joys may they expect to experience on this thrilling journey, in addition to those you have mentioned in your previous answer?

I think it's interesting to put yourself to the test, as well as to feel that your leisure time is being used for something constructive. ■



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cloud storage area



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chess engine



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opening preparation



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Calculate, sacrifice,
mate



ENGINE CLOUD

Top engine on the
best hardware



LET'S CHECK

Knowledge is mate:
200 million analyses



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WESLEY SO

presents:

My Black Secrets in the Modern Italian

and

My Secret Weapon: 1.b3

MY BLACK SECRETS IN THE MODERN ITALIAN

The Italian Game is considered a sound but quiet opening without early trades, giving rise to rich positions where plans are more important than forced variations — in short, an ideal avenue to outplay your opponent without having to learn much theory. But how should you approach new positions and keep a clear head in view of so many playable possibilities? The best way is this: you sit down next to a world class grandmaster and just listen to him!

In a total of nine video clips, top ten player Wesley So talks to IM Oliver Reeh, explaining his personal preferences as Black in the Italian game. The videos are structured according to specific concepts and ideas. Should Black play ...a6 to allow the retreat ...Ba7 or rather ...a5? What's the best way to meet White's plan with Bg5, be it with or without short castling? When is it possible to unleash the early raid ...Ng4 followed by ...f5? What are benefits of the knight manoeuvre Nc6-e7-g6 combined with Nf6-h5? Can one do without ...d6 and play ...d5 rightaway to sharpen up the game immediately? These and many more features the grandmaster explains for Black, providing his White perspective too - as a top gun, So of course employs the Italian with both colours!

Plans, tricks and subtleties in the Italian Game, well-structured and conceptual, explained by a world-class grandmaster — this DVD can take you towards the very top!

US\$ 36.95

MY SECRET WEAPON: 1.b3

The Nimzowitsch-Larsen Attack with 1.b3 (or 1.Nf3 followed by 2.b3) is a system, rather neglected by theorists, which nevertheless can be a forceful weapon in the hands of an ambitious white player. Even Bobby Fischer tried this opening in various games, sometimes preferring it to his beloved 1.e4, and its greatest advocate was the legendary Danish fighter Bent Larsen. Meanwhile, 1.b3 has also found its way into the practice of today's world elite, and now finally a modern top ten player has taken on the subject for ChessBase: none other than Grandmaster Wesley So!

In a total of nine video clips, So talks to IM Oliver Reeh, explaining his view of White's strategy after the four main replies by Black: 1...e5, 1...d5 (2.Nf3!), 1...c5 and 1...Nf6. Often, play transposes to openings like the Queen's Indian or the Nimzo Indian with reversed colours where White simply is a valuable tempo up. Also possible are transitions to the English where once again the move 1.b3 proves very advantageous to White — his bishop will always be the first to appear on the long diagonal!

This DVD also provides insights in the personal thinking of a modern top grandmaster. For example, you'll get to know that So particularly appreciates the bishop pair, but also enjoys enemy doubled pawns (after for instance, Bb2xNf6!). Broaden your chess mind with GM Wesley So and 1.b3!

US\$ 36.95

